

ENGAGING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN MINISTRY:
A STUDY ON THE CROSS-RACIAL/CROSS-CULTURAL MINISTRY
IN THE CALIFORNIA-PACIFIC ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

A Professional Project
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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ABSTRACT

Engaging Cultural Differences in Ministry:

A Study on the Cross-Racial/Cross-Cultural Ministry

in the California-Pacific Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church

by

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This project critically examines issues in cross-racial/cross-cultural ministry of the first-generation Korean pastors serving in the California-Pacific Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. It examines their perceptions of feelings of inadequacy, isolation, negativity, racism, and lack of support and connectedness caused by racial and cultural differences between the clergy and the congregations to which the clergy are appointed to serve.

Studies of demographic changes in the United States show that our nation, especially Southern California, continues to grow into a more multicultural society due to the large influx of immigrants during the last two decades. As a response to this demographic change, The United Methodist Church has practiced cross-racial/cross-cultural ministry appointments by using its open itinerary system. The goal is to make an authentically inclusive church visible in the life of the church. This project critically examines issues and problems involved in cross-racial/cross-cultural ministry of first generation Korean pastors in the California-Pacific Annual Conference in order to articulate cultural differences that influence ministers' readiness and effectiveness to provide adequate leadership, and to explore ways to enhance and increase the effectiveness of cross-racial/cross-cultural ministry.

The expansion of the early church was a result of the first Christians' effort to carry the gospel beyond racial, ethnic, religious, and cultural boundaries of the world of Greco-Roman culture. They experienced ethnic and cultural collisions as they moved from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. Culture can pose a stumbling block insofar as it directs how we communicate, think, behave, and perceive things, no less for the disciples than for those who serve God's church today. The first generation Korean pastors experience racial and cultural collisions when they serve cross-racial/cross-cultural appointments.

To make cross-racial/cross-cultural ministry effective, both the clergy and the congregation should become more culturally aware and sensitive. Cross-racial/cross-cultural ministry affords the Church an opportunity to bring different cultures together for the same purpose. With adequate preparation, cross-racially/cross-culturally appointed clergy to this service can provide the bridge between two cultures. They can mediate between the cultures.

The goal of cross-racial/cross-cultural ministry is not to have tolerance nor increase sensitivity toward racial and cultural differences. It is to journey beyond tolerance and sensitivity. But this change is possible only when we intentionally seek to understand ourselves as racial and cultural beings and to increase cross-cultural competency through educational and training experiences.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
1. Introduction	1
Problem Addressed by the Project	1
Importance of the Problem	1
Thesis	5
Definitions of Major Terms	6
Work Previously Done in the Field	7
Scope and Limitations of the Project	9
Procedure for Integration	9
Chapter Outline	10
2. Issues of Cultural Differences: Cultural Barriers in Communication	12
Concept of Context: High-Context and Low-Context	14
The Power Distance Dimension	22
Monochronic Time and Polychronic Time	25
Individualism and Collectivism	29
The Iceberg Theory	31
From Cultural Differences toward Cultural Awareness	33
3. Biblical Models of Cross-Racial/Cross-Cultural Ministry in the Book of Acts	42
The Church in Jerusalem: Starting Point	44
The Movement into Judea and Samaria	47
The Movement to the Ends of the Earth	51

4. Issues and Strengths in Cross-Racial/Cross-Cultural Ministry	57
Issues and Problems	60
Strengths	67
Empowering Cross-Racial/Cross-Cultural Ministry	69
5. Summary and Conclusion	78
Bibliography	81

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Problem Addressed by the Project

This project deals with the issues in cross-racial/cross-cultural ministry experienced by the first-generation Korean pastors serving in the California-Pacific Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. It critically examines feelings of inadequacy, isolation, negativity, racism, and lack of support and connectedness on the part of the clergy caused by racial and cultural differences between the clergy and the congregations that the clergy serve..

Importance of the Problem

I was fresh out from the seminary by barely three months before I began a resident chaplaincy program of Emory University Hospital. It was only my second week as a chaplain at Emory University Hospital in Atlanta, Georgia. As I knocked on the door of the patient's room, I was anxious with lots of thoughts racing through my mind. Can I provide effective pastoral support to the patient? What if the patient cannot understand my accent? Would the patient be shocked to see an Asian chaplain in a hospital with predominately European-American patients? What if...? As I introduced myself to the patient, the patient's response was thought-provoking, "You are the chaplain! Hmm, you have an interesting job!"

When I had my first appointment to serve a church with European-American and Vietnamese members in San Diego, I had the same questions – the feeling of inadequacy, isolation, and fear of racism – even though a cross-racial/cross-cultural appointment was what I wanted and I had had training and education to be a pastor for any church. Whenever

I introduced myself to Koreans, I had the similar response from them, “You are the pastor of a European-American congregation? You have an interesting job!” It is indeed interesting that a first-generation Korean pastor is serving a church where members’ race and culture are different from that of the pastor’s. I believe it has been possible because the United Methodist Church has been trying to make the vision of an authentically inclusive church become a reality in our multicultural and multiracial society through the clergy appointment system of the church. This appointment has been successful for most of the church, but it also has revealed many issues and problems from both the clergy and the churches.

Studies on the demographic change in the United States show that our nation, especially Southern California continues to grow into a more multicultural society due to large influx of immigrants during the last two decades. Since the beginning of immigration into the United States from the nineteenth century, the United States is in the third major period of immigration. During the 1980s, ten million people immigrated into the United States, both legally and illegally. During the 1990s, another ten million people immigrated into the U. S. and this trend will continue.¹

But more significant aspect of this immigration trend is not in the number of immigrants. Different from the last major period of immigration which was mostly of northern European ancestry, late twenty century and current immigrants are predominantly “Hispanic-Latino and Asian rather than Europeans.”²

The demographic changes in the United States have been accelerated by the birthrate differences between persons of European ancestry and non-European ancestry. “The birthrate of people with European ancestry in the United States slowed to 6 percent between

¹ Mike Regele with Mark Schultz, Death of the Church (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 104.

² Regele, 104.

1980 and 1992 while that of other racial and cultural groups increased by 40 percent.”³ As a result, European-Americans are no longer majority in California and other large urban and border states.⁴ Under these demographic changes, churches, especially mainline Protestant denominations have been reshaped. Churches that have not made the same transition have become “White religious ghettos in the midst of racially diverse communities,” increasingly losing their members since the 1960s.⁵ As the result, the church will die, as the older members of the church die unless they shift the demographics of their membership.

Churches have been struggling to respond to this cultural and racial diversity created by new people moving into their communities. However, a preference for cultural and racial homogeneity continues to dominate in congregational life. Racial and ethnic/cultural homogeneity continues in creating and executing strategies of church growth. The theological education of pastors in most seminaries continues to teach them for leadership in racially and culturally homogeneous congregations. In 1979 Peter Wagner, in his book Our Kind of People, asserts that cultural homogeneity rather than cultural diversity will better serve congregations’ missional strategies and thus for church growth and mutual care of its members, it is important to keep homogeneity of the congregation.⁶

However, the general attitude in some churches toward cultural and racial differences began to shift with the civil right movement in the 1960s. People began to understand that the notion of “melting pot” was no longer valid both in the nation and in the life of the church. From the 1990s, theologians, Christian educators, and pastors and other church

³ Charles R. Foster, Embracing Diversity: Leadership in Multicultural Congregations (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1997), 5.

⁴ Foster, 5.

⁵ Regele, 106.

⁶ C. Peter Wagner, Our Kind of People: The Ethical Dimensions of Church Growth in America (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979), 1-5.

leaders increasingly called for greater cultural awareness in the ministry and life of the church. Some churches have even developed multicultural congregations in seeking to transform the social structures that heretofore have perpetuated racism, classism, sexism and other forms of oppressions in our society.⁷

Over the last thirty years, first generation Korean-American pastors have been appointed to cross-racial/cross-cultural settings specifically to serve European-American congregations in the United Methodist Church. This cross-racial/cross-cultural appointment is unique because pastors born and raised in a foreign culture are serving a congregation whose culture is different from that of the pastors. The success of these pastorates is critically important because US society is becoming increasingly multicultural and multiracial society. These appointments have been possible in The United Methodist Church because pastors are appointed to the local churches by the bishop of each Annual Conference. However, very little study on the uniqueness and importance as well as issues of these appointments has been done.

There are about 25 Korean-American (first generation Korean-American) pastors serving European-American churches in California-Pacific Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. This conference covers the southern California, Guam, and Hawaii. The number of these cross-cultural/cross-racial appointments has been growing steadily during the last twenty years and they have been understood as bridges between two cultures.

All ministries, especially in cross-racial/cross-cultural (hereinafter CR/CC) relationships, occurs within a broader cultural context. Culture has been described as the

⁷ To Learn more about those churches, see Charles Foster and Theodore Brelsford, We Are the Church Together: Cultural Diversity in Congregational Life (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press, 1996); and Nibs Stroupe and Caroline Leach, O Lord, Hold Our Hands: How a Church Thrives in a Multicultural World (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003).

invisible and silent, yet, crucial, component of ministry. The greater the cultural differences between the pastor and the congregation, the greater potential for an increase in clash of expectation, misunderstanding of intentions and meanings, and as a consequence, ineffectiveness of ministry. In order to work with a culturally and racially different congregation, it is important that pastors as well as the congregations grow in an understanding of how contemporary society works in relation to race, culture, stereotype, bias, and related issues.

Cultural and racial differences are not necessarily barriers to effective ministry though they can cause immense confusion because culture profoundly affects people's ways of being, thinking, perceiving, their interpersonal relationships, and so on. The object of this study is to assist those in CR/CC appointments to understand the issues and problems that commonly occur, and second, to open ways to enhance the effectiveness of that ministry in the local churches. The question that this study addresses is: "Are CC/CR pastoral appointments effective as a response to social multiculturalism?"

Thesis

This project critically examines issues on the part of the first generation Korean-American pastors serving CC/CR appointments in California-Pacific Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church in order: (a) to articulate specific intercultural issues that influence ministers' readiness to serve and effectiveness in ministry, and (b) to explore ways to deal with those issues in order to enhance and increase the effectiveness of cross-racial/cross-cultural ministry.

Definitions of Major Terms

Race and Ethnicity: A long history of controversy exists regarding the definition of race and the interchangeable use of the terms race and ethnicity. *Race* refers to a geographical variation in the human population, forming sub-species identified by a range of shared genetic characteristics. Race is now a disputed term that is not regarded as technically precise. Persons of the same race, thus, share some external features or traits such as skin color, body shape, and hair type. Ethnicity, on the other hand, often refers to a shared culture and life style. It is more about commonality than race, religion, or national or geographic origin. An individual could belong to a particular race without sharing ethnic identity with that race. For example, the fact that two Asians share a common heredity or ancestry does not mean that they share the same ethnic identity including values, beliefs, or life style. This project, however, deals with first generation Korean clergy who are recent immigrants and who were born and reared in Korea. These clergy share similar external features as well as ethnic identity. Thus, within the confines of this study, the terms are interchangeable for those Korean clergy.

Culture: The definition of culture has been rooted in sociological and anthropological study. Culture is generally defined as a set of shared assumptions and values where people can predict each others' actions in a given circumstance and react accordingly. It encompasses the whole way of the way in which people live. Culture, thus, influences every aspect of human life: how they express themselves (including emotion), how they think, how their cities are planned and laid out, how transportation systems are organized and function, how political organizations are organized and operated, and how economic systems work, and more.

First generation Korean-American: Among the Korean immigrants, the term first-generation has been used to refer to the Korean immigrants who were born and educated in Korea and came to America when they were adults. Those who were born in Korea but immigrated to America before the puberty are referred to 1.5 generation. Among other ethnic immigrants, first generation refers to those who were born in America whose parents were born in foreign countries. Thus, first generation Italian-American refers to people with Italian heritage who are born in America.

Cross-racial/cross-cultural appointment: In this project, I use this term to refer to the appointments of The United Methodist Church wherein first generation Korean-American clergy are appointed to a church where the members' race and culture differ from that of the pastor.

Work Previously Done in the Field

Even though previous work done in this specific field of cross-racial appointments in the ministry of the church does not have a long list, there is extensive literature that deals with multiculturalism and the church, pastoral counseling in the multicultural setting, and the importance of developing multicultural churches. Eric Law in his book, The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb, reminds us that "each culture has its own characteristics, values, and customs...."⁸ With this understanding, he describes the challenges people face in embracing cultural differences and living together as the wolf and the lamb in Isaiah's vision of the peaceable realm. In The Bush Was Blazing But Not Consumed, he also advances a biblical

⁸ Eric Law, The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb: A Spirituality for Leadership in a Multicultural Community (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1993), 3.

and theological understanding of the multicultural church and calls for maintaining ethnorelativism by examining our ethnocentrism.⁹

In the field of pastoral care and counseling, scholars and researchers published amply around the issue of multiculturalism and counseling. Even though he is not explicitly addressing the issues that pastors appointed to cross-racial settings might encounter in their ministry in the church, Colin Lago and Joyce Thompson, in their book Race, Culture, and Counseling, articulate the importance of culture awareness in counseling and therapy. Paul Pederson, in his book A Handbook for Developing Multicultural Awareness, asserts that pastors need to realize that without understanding of the culture of a particular individual, appropriate and effective communication between the pastor and that person cannot take place. Effective ministry can not be achieved without this as culture profoundly affects people's ways of being, their (interpersonal) behaviors, their notions of meaning and so on.¹⁰

Charles R. Foster and Theodore Brelsford, in their book We Are the Church Together: Cultural Diversity in Congregational Life, tell the stories of the dynamics of difference in multicultural congregations in the Atlanta, Georgia area. They call for the development of multicultural congregations where people of different cultures and races live together as a way of forming community life that embodies a vision of church embracing differences.¹¹ In his book Embracing Diversity, Charles Foster asserts that communities that embrace cultural and racial differences have an "eschatological character."¹² This new community "leads to the possibility that wolves and lambs might dwell together, children

⁹ Eric Law, The Bush Was Blazing But Not Consumed: Developing a Multicultural Community Through Dialogue and Liturgy (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1996).

¹⁰ Colin Lago and Joyce Thompson, Race, Culture and Counseling (Buckingham, PA: Open University Press, 1996); Paul Pederson, A Handbook for Developing Multicultural Awareness, 2nd ed. (Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association, 1994).

¹¹ Foster and Brelsford, We Are the Church Together.

¹² Foster, Embracing Diversity: Leadership in Multicultural Congregation.

might play freely over the homes of poisonous snakes, and cattle and lions would eat side by side.”¹³ Manuel Ortiz and Mary R. Sawyer also emphasize the importance and ways to build a multicultural and multiracial church in the multicultural and multiracial communities.¹⁴

Scope and Limitations of the Project

This project is developed out of my experience during the last six years of serving in CR/CC appointments in two different churches, one as associate pastor in a church with Western European-American and Vietnamese members, and one as pastor in a church with predominately Western European-American members. This project will focus on the ministry of the first generation Korean pastors serving CR/CC appointments in the California-Pacific Annual Conference which covers one of the most multicultural and multiracial areas in the United States. Due to the nature of the appointment system and the geographic locale of the Conference, as well as the culture of the Southern California, the findings and conclusions of this study may not be extensible beyond The United Methodist Church in this conference. It is hoped that the findings of this study may prove to be applicable in other CC/CR pastoral relationships, even if only for anticipatory reflection.

Procedure for Integration

This project will integrate library research, use of narrative interview method, and narrative analysis. Extensive library research will be utilized to focus on two areas: first to study theological and biblical background of cross-racial/cross-cultural ministry; second, to examine the issues of culture, race, and multiculturalism in the multicultural society. Ten to fifteen first generation Korean-American pastors in the California-Pacific Annual Conference

¹³ Foster, 38.

¹⁴ Manuel Ortiz, One New People: Models for Developing a Multiethnic Church (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996); Mary R. Sawyer, The Church on the Margin: Living Christian Community (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003).

will be interviewed with open-ended questions to give a full extempore narration of important events and experiences from their ministry in local churches. For this interview, three or four different meetings will be conducted with three to five pastors in attendance at each meeting. Each meeting will last from one-and-a-half hours to two hours. If the pastor(s) can not attend the interview due to distance or time conflict, a telephone interview will be utilized. An interview guide with 5-7 broad questions supplemented by probes questions will be used. The Korean language will be used during the meeting. After the meetings, stories of interviewees will be translated into English and the transcribed text will be analyzed to examine their experiences in providing ministry to church members who are racially and culturally different from themselves.

Chapter Outline

Chapter 1 gives the reader a brief understanding of the problem, the importance of the problem in the life of the church, and the direction that this thesis will follow in seeking to provide answer to the problem. It will also provide information of how the United States, especially Southern California, has become a multicultural society.

Chapter 2 deals with the issues of race, culture, multiculturalism, and the church. As I mentioned earlier, culture will play an important role when a pastor provides ministry to the members of different culture. In this chapter, I am concerned with how differences in race and culture between pastors and the church members affect communication, behavior, perception, understanding, outcome of the pastoral care in the pastoral relationship.

Chapter 3 details a Bible study on the Book of Acts that provides a biblical perspective on the issue of culture. It will examine the book in terms of how the early Christianity, a new movement, a new culture among the Jews, spreads in the world of the

Greco-Roman culture. As the apostles and disciples witness the gospel in Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, it collides with different religion and culture of the Greco-Roman world. It seeks to understand the expansion of the early church in terms of cross-cultural ministry by the followers of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 4 provides narrative analysis of interviews with Korean pastors serving CC/CR appointments in the California-Pacific Conference of The United Methodist Church. This chapter is concerned first, with a deeper engagement of cultural and racial issues in the actual ministry of the pastors serving CC/CR appointments and second, ways to empower this unique ministry so that effectiveness of the ministry can be enhanced. My concern is to provide insights and practical resources to enhance CC/CR appointments in The United Methodist Church as a way of building a constructive, effective, and more fully inclusive church in multicultural communities.

The final chapter provides a summary/conclusion and reflections that might be utilized by clergy, congregations, and conference leaders who will work in CC/CR appointments and ministry in the future.

CHAPTER 2

Issues of Cultural Differences: Cultural Barriers in Communication

Humans understand the world according to the information that they have accumulated from the environment through their lives. Members of different cultures accumulate different types of information and use that information to explain what people do. This process of information accumulation and the use of it are so pervasive that we are not even aware of them. As a member of a culture, people do this information accumulation and use it without thinking. For example, we, in America, drive on the right side of the road without even thinking. Similarly, without thinking, we make assumptions about the way the world is – about the way others communicate and behave, about the way things are done in the family, in the office, and in society. In other words, culture constrains and informs how we see and interact with the world. For most of the members of a culture, there is one and only one way to look the world.

This way of behaving does not cause any problem and is even helpful in understanding the world as long as the people of one culture interact with others who share the same culture. But as American society becomes more multicultural, what is helpful in a culturally homogeneous environment becomes a stumbling block in another that leads to misunderstandings, misconceptions, unmet expectations, frustration, fear, anxiety, conflict, and even bloodshed and perhaps even war.

Historically, there have been many different ways of how perceive cultural differences between people. In the 1800s, when England was at the height of its colonization of other lands, people began to look at differences between people and concluded that these

differences were a result of genetic deficiency. This understanding was used to justify the social and economic policies that would keep Western European societies in a superior position.¹

Another view of cultural differences was developed from the study of anthropology. As anthropological researches began to contact with different cultures around the world, they started to study them as primitive and as scientific curiosities. They borrowed the German *kultur* and introduced so called primitive culture as a contrast to civilization. They wanted to observe and record other cultures before they were destroyed by modern influences.²

The next view of cultural differences was developed alongside with government programs such as Peace Corps and Vistas. Even though many people volunteered for these government-led programs intended to enhance understanding of different cultures, the prevailing perspective was that other cultures were in some ways inferior to Western culture. The presupposition was that other cultures were in need of assistance from the Western cultures to fix their deficiencies. Western culture was something that could be acquired to move from primitive society to one of higher social order.³

The current view of cultural differences assumes that no culture is superior to any other culture. This view asserts that no culture is either bad or good. It further assumes that people are better able to understand and accept other more quickly when they learn about the other person's cultural heritage, the person's perspective and intentions.⁴

This current view of cultural differences is very important especially in a multicultural society. It will prompt us to suspend judgment until we understand why a

¹Wanda M. L. Lee, An Introduction to Multicultural Counseling (Philadelphia, PA: Accelerated Development, 1999), 4.

² Lee, 4.

³ Lee, 4.

⁴ Lee, 4-5.

person of another culture habitually behaviors in a specific way. We will be able to understand how a particular behavior fits into the other's cultural context and becomes a natural way of life for the person. However, encounter with another culture does not always bring positive responses. One may be quick to judge another culture as inferior to one's own culture, or become defensive thinking he/she is threatened. David W. Augsburger asserts:

Anyone who knows only one culture knows no culture...

Knowing another culture may free one from freeze one to the culture of origin. When the knowledge of contrasting perspectives shatters illusions and perforates old boundaries, the collision of cultures may forge new central commitments that weld old assumptions into new patterns. But the encounter with another culture can result in freezing old boundaries, in conforming biases, in asserting the superiority of one's own assumptions, and thus in reinforcing the cultural encapsulation of an unexamined worldview. Cultural values held as central commitments can free us and provide a flexible resilience. Cultural views maintained as external boundaries isolate and encapsulate us.⁵

Encounter with another culture afford us the opportunity to change in ways that communicate our true meanings and feelings, or, negatively solidify our prejudice, cultural racism, and discrimination.

In this chapter, I will present cultural differences between Western culture and non-Western culture, the iceberg theory of culture, and finally how we react when we encounter the cultural differences. When I present the cultural differences, it is not to exhaust the cultural differences between the two worlds – Western and non-Western world, but to emphasize important differences in order to understand how people from different cultures behavior, communicate, and interact.

Concept of Context: High-Context and Low-Context

Humans use various methods to communicate a message or meaning. In order to have meaning in communication, both the sender and the receiver need to understand the

⁵ David W. Augsburger, Pastoral Counseling across Cultures (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 18.

various contexts: the external context of the situation and the internal context of the sender and the receiver.⁶ The external context of the situation may include the physical environment in which the communication occurs as well as the role of the message sender and the receiver. When I came to America and was in a classroom, the professor asked the question in the middle of his lecture, “Are you in the ball park?” To a foreign student such a question is meaningless. Depending upon its context, the question can have at least two different meanings. If the question is asked in the middle of class by a teacher, it asks whether the students have some measure of understanding of what the teacher is saying. More literally if the question were asked of a person who actually went out to see a ball game in a stadium, it inquires whether the person has arrived in the ball park itself. Though the context determines the meaning of the question, in addition to being aware that the question is not to be understood literally, the foreign student must also have an awareness of the cultural-metaphoric meaning of the question in order to understand. Therefore, without being aware of the external context, the receiver cannot understand the meaning that the sender intends.

“The internal contexts of both the sender and the receiver include their cultural environments. These are the values, beliefs, thought patterns, and myths imbedded in the internal cultures of the communicators.”⁷ One of the functions of our culture is to provide a selective screen between ourselves and the environment. Through this screening function, “culture designates what we pay attention to and what we ignore. This provides structure for the world and protects the nervous system from information overload.”⁸

We receive and process huge amounts of information everyday. We may have many tasks to perform to be effective members of the organization. We might have other tasks to

⁶ Law, Bush Was Blazing But Not Consumed, 100.

⁷ Law, Bush Was Blazing But Not Consumed, 101.

⁸ Edward T. Hall, Beyond Culture ((Garden City, NY: Anchor Books/Doubleday, 1981), 85.

undertake when we return home after a day of work in the office and as a consequence, experience information overload. Through screening process, culture enables us to pay attention to necessary information and to ignore other information unconsciously most of the time. Because our internal contexts are different depending upon where we are born, raised, and educated, that is, how we are en-cultured, we may pay attention to what others may ignore and we may ignore what others may pay attention to in the same environment. This will lead us to different interpretations even though we are in the same environment. For example, let us suppose that you were physically abused by your father when you were a child. Whenever your father abused you, he raised his eyebrows as an expression of anger. Later, whenever you see a person with raised eyebrows, you may recall the time that you were abused and fear of physical abuse again. When it happens, you may interact with the person in fear even though the person does not have any intention of harming you, despite raised eyebrows. Raising one's eyebrows may mean surprise or shock. Thus, depending on our internal context, we may observe, react, and perceive very different meanings in the same situation. To achieve effective communication people with different internal contexts need to spend the time and energy together to establish a common context in which they can send and receive the common meaning.⁹ Edward T. Hall calls this process "contexting."¹⁰

By contexting or establishing a common context, the communicators can screen out the necessary information for an effective and economical communication. It is a very important process to handle the very complexity of human interactions so that the system can avoid information overload. For example, physicians working in the same disciplinary area can communicate without explaining terms that they use because they have learned the

⁹ Hall, Beyond Culture, 85-89; Law, Bush Was Blazing But Not Consumed, 101.

¹⁰ Hall, Beyond Culture, 9-24, 86.

common medical terms and language, that is, they have established a common context through previous training and education. They can understand each other efficiently and effectively because they share the same internal context.

Edward T. Hall explains that one of the major differences between cultures is the level of context that a cultural group relies on when they communicate. He distinguishes high-context culture from low-context culture depends on how a common meaning is carried in the communication.

In high-context cultures, people value the collectiveness of the community over the individual. Individuals' interests can be sacrificed if it is necessary to maintain harmony and collective interests of the community. In this culture, "most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message."¹¹ High-context cultures highly value tradition, making change is slow and sometimes difficult. They value unity and harmony of the community so that people are strongly bonded together. People in authority are responsible to keep their tradition and they are responsible for any problem or unwanted results even they are caused by their subordinates. Often a director or head of a department will take responsibility when unwanted outcome or problems arise in an organization.

In communication, the receiver is expected to understand the message with minimal explicit information because the sender and the receiver have done "contexting." During communication they may use considerable nonverbal communication such as body language or simple sounds which have common meanings in the culture. They may talk around the subject without ever getting speaking of it directly. This can be a frustration for a person

¹¹ Hall, Beyond Culture, 91.

from a low-context culture because it is difficult for a person of low-context culture to discern the point of high-context communication.¹²

Effective communication depends on preprogrammed information (internal context or contexting) between the sender and the receiver. Knowing the tradition and being a part of the community is an important part of programming in order to communicate effectively. This programming process takes a long time, but if this programming does not take place, the communication cannot be effective and efficient. Once the programming has made sufficient progress, “communication is economical, fast, efficient, and satisfying.”¹³ Because of this time-consuming programming process it is easy to distinguish between members and non-members of the community – members of the community can communicate effectively and efficiently but the non-members of the community cannot communicate efficiently until they undergo pre-programming to understand non-verbal language and implicit messages of high-context culture.¹⁴

People in high-context cultures are not accustomed to dealing with anything new, that is, with change. To deal with a new situation, they have to resort to a low-context interpretive method in their high-context setting in order to acquire detailed information and instruction. This will take them more time than it would for people in low-context cultures because they need more contexting time.

Low-context cultures are more individualistic culture. People in this culture tend not to be deeply involved with others. Since they do not share a common context with each other when they communicate, they put most of the information in the transmitted message to make sure that they share the common meaning during the communication. In these cultures,

¹² Law, Bush Was Blazing But Not Consumed, 102.

¹³ Hall, Beyond Culture, 101.

¹⁴ Law, Bush Was Blazing But Not Consumed, 103; Hall, Beyond Culture, 113.

the explicit message, usually spoken or written, are highly valued as the main means of communication. People pay less attention to implicit information such as body language than in high-context cultures.

Low-context culture does not mean that people do not have a cultural context. It means that they still have a context but they are less aware of it or they assume that it does not exist. Because of this people in low-context cultures look for universal rules and values during interaction with others. Thus, they do not make a great distinction between insiders and outsiders. Because of their openness, low-context cultures may seem to be an inclusive at first because of their openness, but they exclude others, perhaps unconsciously, when they expect others to be similarly low-context. For people from high-context cultures, once again, it is difficult and takes time to lower their context to be a part of low-context cultures.

Since people do not have a strong tie with each other or with organization in low-context cultures, people change their relationships easily and fast without a great deal of remorse or guilty. Organizational coherence depends on the system, not on individuals with authority. People can rapidly accommodate to new situations without a great amount of struggle and time to readjust to the new situations; they simply need less contexting time.¹⁵

In high-context cultures, conflict is to be understood as a common characteristic of ongoing relationships in a less mobile, more permanent context and relationship that can not be ignored to maintain integrity of the community.¹⁶ These cultures prefer indirect, ambiguous, cautious, nonconfrontational, and subtle ways of working through communication and relational tangles. Since everything is related to everything else and

¹⁵ Hall, Beyond Culture, 105-13; Law, Bush Was Blazing But Not Consumed, 104.

¹⁶ For full description of conflict in high-context cultures and low-context cultures, see David W. Augsburger, Conflict Mediation across Culture: Pathways and Patterns (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992).

everyone is closely related, a conflict tends to be seen in more holistic terms. Conflict is not to win the situation or take a better position through the battle but to express and discharge tension and frustrations especially between two persons or parties. This process will allow some adjustment and relaxation for both parties involved in the conflict. Solving conflict, tactfully and with indirect speech that will not cause other person to lose face is normative in high-context cultures because preserving group integrity and saving face are strong mutual affirmed values.

In low-context cultures, conflict is more likely to be seen as a one-to-one confrontation due to difference between two parties. Conflict develops when the individual's expectations of what is appropriate behavior are violated. These cultures prefer directness, specificity, frankness in stating the problem, confrontation, and demands. The person who has conflict will seek to fractionate the conflict into the smallest possible slice of interaction by using explicit messages and communication skills. Openness and directness are valued in solving conflict in low-context cultures.

When conflict occurs between a person from a low-context culture and a person from high-context culture, the process of solving the conflict can be frustrating for both of them. Indirect, ambiguous, and subtle way of talking by a person from high-context culture, continuously talking about the conflict without making the point directly can be frustrating for a person from a low-context culture. When people from low-context cultures experience the indirect and ambiguous way problem solving methods of high-context cultures, they may come to quick judgment, "why can't they be honest about the problem?"

A direct, open, and frank way of talking by a person of low-context culture can be threatening to a person of high-context culture. When the high-context culture people

experience direct and open problem solving, they can feel threatened and may retreat even more. They might even stop responding to the low-context people. When they cannot continue the meeting, the high-context people retreat to the comfort of their own culture by gathering and talking with people from their own culture.

Table 1

Summary of Low-Context and High-Context Culture

High-Context	Low-Context
group-oriented	individual-oriented
in communication rely heavily on the physical context or the shared context of the transmitter and receiver; very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message	in communication rely on explicit coding of information being communicated; less aware of contexts
spiral logic	linear logic
take time for “contexting”	adjust to new situation with little contexting
conflict may occur because of violations of collective expectations	conflict may occur because of violations of individual expectations
deal with conflict by concealment	deal with conflict by revealment
indirect, nonconfrontational attitude	direct, confrontational attitude
“face” saving	face finding
focus on relationship	focus on action and solution
ambiguous, indirect strategies when solving conflict	open, direct strategies when solving conflict

(Law, Bush Was Blazing But Not Consumed, 106)

The low-context people may well come to the judgment that they are “being exclusive.” “If a decision needs to be made, the low-context people get very frustrated with what they consider the “nonresponsive” and “nonparticipatory” attitudes of the others and make the decision themselves without truly understanding the others’ perspective.”¹⁷ Without understanding each other’s cultural differences, the low-context people and the high-context people may speak one another but cannot truly communicate.

The Power Distance Dimension

After extensively researching among employees of subsidiaries of one large US-based multinational corporation in 40 countries around the world, Geert Hofstede attempted to identify cultural differences in terms of four dimensions: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism – collectivism, and masculinity – femininity.¹⁸ Power distance indicates the extent to which a society accepts the fact that power in institutions and organizations is distributed unequally. Hofstede asserts that culture “affects human thinking, organizations, and institutions in predictable ways.”¹⁹ His work has been used by many writers studying cultural differences transnationally.²⁰

People in different culture have developed different solutions to inequality. Hofstede describes power distance as a continuum, and the 40 countries that he studied fall somewhere in between the two extremes of high power distance and low power distance. People in the high power distance cultures believe that there should be an order power. So they accept that

¹⁷ Law, Bush Was Blazing But Not Consumed, 105.

¹⁸ Geert Hofstede, Culture’s Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values, abridged ed. (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1984).

¹⁹ Hofstede, 11.

²⁰ For more description of this study please see Lago and Thompson, Race, Culture, and Counseling, 45-46; Law, Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb, 18-22; Lucia Ann McSpadden, Meeting God at the Boundaries: Cross-Cultural-Cross-Racial Clergy Appointments (Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church, 2003), 57-59.

inequalities in power and status as natural and inevitable: power and status are inborn or they are inherent in a position. In these cultures everyone has his or her rightful place according to the level of power and status. Thus there is a clear division between the small number of power holders and the other members – powerless or subordinates – of the society.

The power holders and the subordinates perform different roles and they treat each other as different and tend not to mix socially. On an individual level, the power holders believe that they possess privilege entitled them through their position in the society. The powerless accept their powerless status and usually do not feel that they can challenge the inequality of the system. Therefore, power and authority are usually not challenged or changed. Changes may occur when the powerless people feel that they are not satisfied with the current power system and thus gather together to express their dissatisfaction. In some instances this may lead to dethroning of the power holders.

It is understood that the power holders are responsible to look after the powerless and provide supervision; the powerless are not expected to take initiative or challenge the power. The power holders tend to be the ones who have both education and wealth. The powerless tend to be poor and have limited access to the higher education, especially higher education.

People in the low power distance cultures believe that inequities in power and status should be minimized in society. Hierarchy or legitimate use of power is based on experience and/or knowledge; it is only for the convenience of performing tasks and achieving goals of an organization. This inequality of the power is limited within organization and thus everyone is equal when they are outside of the organization.

Everyone has equal rights in this culture; those in positions with power and authority have no greater rights than anyone else. People with higher positions tend to deemphasize

their power and authority, and try to minimize the differences between themselves and subordinates. Also, they tend to delegate their power and authority to their subordinates. Subordinates are encouraged to take initiative and do not need to be supervised closely. In this culture, people believe that they can change the system by redistributing power and

Table 2

High Power Distance and Low Power Distance

High Power Distance	Low Power Distance
Inequality in society in which everybody has a rightful place; high and low are protected by this order.	Inequality in society should be minimized.
Hierarchy means existential inequality.	Hierarchy means an inequality of roles, established for convenience.
Power is a basic fact of society that antedates good or evil. Its legitimacy is irrelevant.	The use of power should be legitimate and is subject to the judgment as to whether it is good or evil.
Power holders are entitled to privileges.	All should have equal rights.
The way to change a social system is to dethrone those in power.	The way to change a social system is to redistribute power.
Other people are a potential threat to one's power and can rarely be trusted.	People at various power levels feel less threatened and more prepared to trust people.
Countries: Philippines, Mexico, Venezuela, India, Singapore, Brazil, Hong Kong, France, Colombia, Turkey, Belgium, Peru, Thailand, Chile	Countries: Austria, Israel, Denmark, New Zealand, Ireland, Swede, Norway, Finland, Switzerland, Great Britain, Germany, Australia, Netherlands, Canada, U.S.A.

(Lago and Thompson, 46;
Law, The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb, 22)

authority. For the powerless, this means that they gain more power and advance to higher positions. For the power holders, this means that they include the powerless in the system by delegating their power.²¹

When people from the low power distance cultures work together with people from the high power distance culture, they can feel confusion, conflict, and frustration if they are not aware cultural differences between them. A Korean pastor stated that one of the most difficult situations while serving European-American congregation happened when his understanding of pastoral authority came into collision with church secretary's understanding of pastor's authority. As a person from high power distance culture, the pastor believed that his authority and power could not be challenged by the secretary, subordinate. But when there was conflict between him and the secretary, the secretary confronted him with directedness and he felt that this was unacceptable. He was offended and it took a long period of time to restore the relationship.

Monochronic Time and Polychronic Time

Everybody has the same twenty-four hours a day, the same length in everywhere around the world. But people of different culture think about and use time differently. According to Edward T. Hall, people of the Western culture "tend to think of time as something fixed in nature, something around us and from which we cannot escape; an ever-present part of the environment, just like the air we breathe."²² He calls this American understanding of time for "monochronic time" in contrast to "polychronic time."

In monochronic time culture, usually in the Western and other highly industrialized countries, time is attached to productivity and profitability, thus time becomes something that

²¹ Law, Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb, 20.

²² Edward T. Hall, The Silent Language (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books/Doubleday, 1981), 7.

we can either save or waste. Out of this environment comes a particular view of time, encompassing: being on time (punctuality), little or no time for something, wasting time, making time, buying time, finding time, saving time, and not losing time. Scheduling, planning, goal setting and predictability are important values for this culture. The amount of time becomes the measuring device for life and work – we are tied to time that we cannot escape from it because life is quantified into time frames where seconds, minutes, and hours are significant aspects of life. Time is handled as if it were a material object.

Monochronic time cultures also have a future orientation. Long-term planning is a very important part of every organization for it to grow or survive. People pay less or even no attention to the past because they are future oriented. The focus on time and the organization's drive for productivity and profitability tend to reduce people to machinery or mechanism of productivity. People in American culture are "literally time-ridden."²³

When a person of monochronic time culture meets others, time has to be assigned to each person, and during that time period – scheduled time period – the person can meet with only one person or group. Monochronic time is so thoroughly learned and so thoroughly integrated into American culture that it is treated as though it were the only natural and "logical" way of organizing life.²⁴ Since monochronic time culture demands that everything should be fit into a schedule, it can alienate people from the self. Edward T. Hall asserts:

Many Americans make the common mistake of associating the schedule with reality and one's self or the activity as something that is removed from life. M-time can alienate us from ourselves and deny us the experience of context in the wider sense. That is, M-time narrows one's view of events in much the same way as looking through a cardboard tube narrows vision, and it influences subtly and in depth how we think – in segmented compartments.²⁵

²³ Hall, *Silent Language*, 9.

²⁴ Hall, *Beyond Culture*, 20.

²⁵ Hall, *Beyond Culture*, 20-21.

Even though it is strongly believed that neither time value is better than the other, many people criticize monochronic time culture's obsession with time.

Polychronic time culture is not so concerned about seconds and minutes or even hours. Seasonal time or events such as when crops are planted and harvested are more important in this culture. The days are not divided into small parts by using minutes and hours but are seen as opportunities in which people can do timely things such as sawing, watering the plants, caring a child, or visiting a neighbor.

People in polychronic time cultures are not concerned with meeting a person at an assigned (scheduled) time. They are more concerned with relationship and doing things in its proper time. Person in polychronic time culture may say to his friend, "I will see you around the lunch time" rather than saying "I will see you at one o'clock." One cannot predict when friend will stop by but one knows that the friend is coming. The friend who pops in will get priority over other scheduled appointments. In this culture, a person can meet with several people at the same time in his/her office to discuss different matters with different persons.

Edward T. Hall states:

Monochronic time and polychronic time represents two variants solutions to the use of both time and space as organizing frames of activities. Space is included because the two systems (time and space) are functionally interrelated. Monochronic time emphasizes schedule, segmentation, and promptness. Polychronic time systems are characterized by several things happening at once. They stress involvement of people and completion of transactions rather than adherence to preset schedules. Polychronic time is treated as much less tangible than monochronic time. Polychronic time is apt to be considered a point rather than a ribbon or a road, and that point is sacred.²⁶

Even the unexpected appearance of a friend is an important moment; therefore, it can not be ignored if the relationship is to be properly maintained.

²⁶ Hall, Beyond Culture, 17.

Table 3

Monochronic Time and Polychronic Time

Monochronic Time	Polychronic Time
Time is attached to productivity and profitability: use, manage, save, or waste.	Seasonal time rather than segmented time line such as seconds, minutes, and hours.
Schedule and plans are important.	Activities do not fit into scheduled frames.
Task, future oriented	Relation oriented

When people of monochronic time cultures interact with people of polychronic time cultures (such as Latin America and the Middle East), it can be frustrating and stressful. In the markets and stores of polychronic culture, the clerk is surrounded by customers and everyone is trying to get the attention of the clerk. There is no order as to who is served next. This will make the people from monochronic time culture confused and frustrated and possibly angry. They do not know if they will be ever served by the clerk as they wait.²⁷ The same situation will occur in a restaurant of a polychronic time culture. Customers are not served by the order of arrival at the restaurant. Waiters/waitresses will serve the customers randomly or will serve several different tables together by shifting the service from a table to another. If people from monochronic cultures do not understand how things are done in polychronic cultures, it can serve as a source of stress or frustration. They may even come to quick judgment, "What's wrong these people? They don't keep the order and I don't receive the attention that I deserve."

²⁷ Hall, Beyond Culture, 17.

Individualism and Collectivism

In the United States, we frequently hear the popular phrase “Do your own thing” or army motto, “Be all you can be” frequently. These statements imply that North Americans value doing it on their own – individualism. Even though people value family and friends, they have a strong value for making their own decisions independent from others’ opinions and suggestions.

Individualism is concerned with giving priority to one’s personal goals over the goals of one’s community. Taking care of oneself comes first in these individualistic cultures. It also has a strong connection with I-identity. To establish an appropriate identity which asserts one’s strength, a person has to separate her or himself from others to fulfill one’s potential. In this kind of culture, people tend not to share one’s problems and worries with others. In terms of personal space, individualism tries to maintain and respect one’s physical and psychological space. People usually do not touch each other even during times of grief.²⁸

In the non-Western world, people do not think in as much in individualistic terms but place more emphasis on being a member of a group or community, as a part of a collective whole. Scholars call this “collectivism.”²⁹ People in collectivist cultures do not make important decisions on their own. They are made in consultation with family members or members of a group because the family or group’s interest, well-being, and harmony must come first. Because each person belongs to the community, values, beliefs, traditions, and decision made by the community must be embraced and lived out by each member. “One

²⁸ Pittu Laungani, “Culture and Identity: Implications for Counseling,” in Counseling in a Multicultural Society, ed. Stephen Palmer and Pittu Laungani (London; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1999), 46-47.

²⁹ Lago and Thompson, 47.

Table 4

Individualism and Collectivism

Individualism

In society, everyone ought to take care of him/herself and his/her immediate family.

‘I’ consciousness holds sway.

Identity is based in the individual.

There is emotional independence of the individual from organizations.

Belief is placed in individual decisions.

Value standards should apply to all (universalism).

Collectivism

In society, people are born into extended families or clans who protect them in exchange for loyalty.

‘We’ consciousness holds sway.

Identity is based in the social system.

There is emotional dependence of individuals on organizations and institutions.

Belief is placed in group decisions.

Value standards differ for in-group and out-group (particularism).

(Lago and Thompson, 48.)

acts in accordance with the expectations of the group. One’s own desires are subordinated to those of the group. One draws one’s identity from the community and fulfills its expectations...Conformity to community norms is expected and enforced.”³⁰

Children of this culture will follow parents’ expectations and wishes when they choose a college or university. Even though the parents’ will is different from their own, they are expected to follow parents’ decision as the purpose of a higher education is to fulfill family’s

³⁰ Duane Elmer, Cross-Cultural Connections: Stepping Out and Fitting in Around the World (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 136.

desires and goals, not those of the individuals. One's identity is intrinsically assigned by being born into a specific family, group, or community; it is assigned and not achieved.³¹

The Iceberg Theory

Most of the cultural differences described here may not be overt in encounter with others from different cultures. Differences are rooted in a long period of reinforced perceptions, experiences, practices, and habits in one's relationship with the surrounding environment. They are deeply embedded in one's communications, behaviors, and every daily activity. Given the profound depth of these differences, Eric Law asserts that learning to live with those who are from different culture is something like a wolf learning to live with a lamb peacefully. But it is almost impossible without constant effort. "Perhaps we have to go against the "instinct" of our cultures in order for us to stop replaying the fierce-devouring-the-small scenario of intercultural encounter."³²

It is not easy task to go against our instinct, or culture, because most of it is working at a sub or unconscious level as Edward T. Hall asserts:

Culture hides much more than it reveals, and strangely enough what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants. Years of study have convinced me that the real job is not to understand foreign culture but to understand our own. I am also convinced that all that one ever gets from studying foreign culture is a token understanding. The ultimate reason for such study is to learn more about how one's own system works. The best reason for exposing oneself to foreign ways is to generate a sense of vitality and awareness – an interest in life which can come only when one lives through the shock of contrast and difference.³³

Because culture exists by definition outside of awareness,³⁴ many scholars have used the

³¹ Laungani, 49.

³² Law, Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb, 3-4.

³³ Hall, Silent Language, 30.

³⁴ Edward C. Stewart and Milton J. Bennett, American Cultural Patterns: A Cross-Cultural Perspective, rev. ed. (Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1991), 12.

iceberg theory for the better understanding of culture.³⁵ We can see only a small portion of an iceberg. When two icebergs are present, they seem to be safe as they maintain a safe distance from each other. But most of the iceberg is unseen, hidden under the waterline, creating a potential danger when it collides with another iceberg.

Culture functions like this iceberg. When we see the visible part of it such as dress, food, and music, they do not seem to hide potential hazard. Furthermore, the constituents of visible culture are easily learned, can be modified, and thus may not cause problems when they collide with another culture. But the hidden, invisible part of culture functions in a different way.

Edward T. Hall uses the terms “external” and “internal” culture for a better understanding of cultural attributes.³⁶ External culture is the conscious part of the culture. It is the part that we can see, taste, and hear. It is acknowledged beliefs and values. It is explicitly learned and can be changed as the environment changes. But the external part of a culture constitutes only a small portion of culture. The major part of culture is the internal part which consists of the unconscious beliefs and values, thought patterns, norms, and myths that influence how we behave, perceive, think, and everything that we do.³⁷

Internal culture is like an instinct. When we touch a hot object – like the surface of a hot oven – we react without thinking why we act in that way. We take our hand away from the hot object as quickly as possible. Internal culture works similarly as Eric Law states:

The cultural environment in which we grew up shapes the way we behave and think. Implicit in this cultural environment are the myths, values, beliefs, and thought

³⁵ For more information about this theory, see Gary R. Weaver, “Understanding and Coping with Cross-Cultural Adjustment Stress,” in Cross-Cultural Orientation: New Conceptualization and Applications, ed. R. Michael Paige (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986), 134-41; Lago and Thompson, 50-51; and McSpadden, 51.

³⁶ Hall, Beyond Culture.

³⁷ McSpadden 51; and Lago and Thompson, 51.

patterns that influence our behavior and the way we perceive and respond to our surroundings. Most of the time, we are unconscious of their existence. They are implicitly learned and are very difficult to change. We are conditioned to react to our environment in particular ways that are not very different from an instinctual physical reaction to stimuli...

Internal culture is like the air we breathe. We need it to survive and make sense of the world that we live in, but we may not be conscious of it.³⁸

This is why we come to a quick judgment when we encounter others from a different culture.

When two different cultures collide, problems do not happen on the external culture, conscious level of culture. Once again, we can learn external culture. We can easily change our behaviors, cover odor, and wear different cloths in order to adapt and accommodate to the situation. We can even modify our acknowledged beliefs and values by using intellectual reasoning and reflection. Most conflicts arise on the internal level of culture – on the unconscious, instinctual level as Eric F. H. Law claims:

Where the parties involved are not even conscious of why they feel and react the way they do. Since each person thinks only in her own thought pattern, she cannot even understand why the others do not perceive things the way she does. It is like two icebergs hitting each other under the water. On the surface they appear to be at a safe distance from each other. This communication breakdown creates a mutual animosity, causing a need to protect oneself. This defense usually comes in the form of putting down the other or assuming one's own culture is superior.³⁹

It is imperative that we need to understand the unconscious instinctual level of cultural differences in order to live with others in peace and mutual respect.

From Cultural Differences toward Culture Awareness

When we think of the United States with different immigrants from various countries, one of the symbols that comes to our mind is the notion of “melting pot.” In his play The Melting Pot, Israel Zangwill described Ellis Island in the New York harbor as a melting pot, “a powerful image of the crucible in which old traditions were boiled away and

³⁸ Law, Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb, 6.

³⁹ Law, Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb, 9

in which a new, homogeneous, uniquely American identity was refined.”⁴⁰ The play’s central character David exclaims:

America is God’s Crucible, the great Melting Pot where all the races of Europe are melting and re-forming...when I see them at Ellis Island, here you stand in your fifty groups, with your fifty languages and histories, and your fifty blood hatreds and rivalries. But you won’t be long like that, brothers, for these are the fires of God you’ve come to – ...

Germans and Frenchmen, Irishmen and Englishmen, Jews and Russians – into the Crucible with you all! God is making the American!⁴¹

The image of the melting pot has been a metaphor of the struggle that many immigrants have experienced to be a part of America in which all of the races, ideologies, beliefs, and values of other countries are melted down into one great amalgam.

The process of making the melting pot is what sociologists call an amalgamation theory. It is not an assimilation in which minority groups’ cultures are consumed by a dominant culture. Rather, in amalgamation process, each minority groups become a part of a continual process of fusion, and finally create a new identity, culture. So Zangwill writes that “the process of amalgamation is not assimilation or simple surrender to the dominant type, as is popularly suppose, but an all-round give-and-take by which the final type may be enriched or impoverished.”⁴²

Zangwill’s understanding of the melting pot also has a theological significance. According to him, the creation of the crucible is seen as an act of God. The play ends with David’s blessing upon America, a country where people of every race and religion from around the world will come and be united to establish the Kingdom of God:

⁴⁰ E. Allen Richardson, Strangers in This Land: Pluralism and the Response to Diversity in the United States (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1988), 23.

⁴¹ Richardson, 23, citing Israel Zangwill, The Melting Pot: Drama in Four Acts (New York: Macmillan Co., 1917), 33.

⁴² Richardson, 109, citing Zangwill, 203.

There she lies, the great Melting Pot – Listen!...the harbor where a thousand mammoth feeders come from the ends of the world to pour in their human freight. Ah, what a stirring and a seeing! Celt and Latin, Slav and Teuton Greek and Syrian, – black and yellow – ...

Yes, East and West, and North and South, the palm and pine, the pole and the equator, the crescent and the cross – how the great Alchemist melts and fuses them with his pouring flame! Here they shall all unite to build the Republic of Man and the Kingdom of God.⁴³

In the melting pot, differences will be melted into a new form of society where uniqueness of each race, ethnicity, and culture cannot be seen anymore. It was to believe that there would be no more injustice and inequality in this new divine order, the American Dream.

Zangwill's theory of melting pot has both supporters and critics. By the 1960s, however, people come to a conclusion that different race, ethnicity, and culture have not melted into one group to make a homogeneous identity. They introduced the term cultural pluralism to describe the American society. In theory different ethnic groups have been forced to abandon their ethnic and cultural languages and heritages under the melting pot theory. In reality however, each ethnic group has kept its unique culture and identity while participating in a large society of an "American culture." As ethnic diversity increased due to Hispanic-Latino and Asian immigrants during the 1990s and 1980s, the debate about cultural pluralism or multiculturalism has continued to create another expression of the American Dream.

In a multicultural society, we encounter people of another race, ethnicity, and culture on a daily basis. We are exposed to different ways of perceiving and behaving, different beliefs and values. Then how ought people to react when they encounter with different people of another culture? How will people cope with differences? The following developmental model of intercultural sensitivity was originally developed by Milton J.

⁴³ Richardson, 110, citing Zangwill, 184.

Bennett and has been utilized by scholars and organizations to develop intercultural sensitivity. The model studies a person's response to different cultures as an indicator of development of intercultural sensitivity. According to Bennett, one moves through stages when one is interacting with different culture from one's own. The stages include denial, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, and integration. The first three stages are understood to be "ethnocentric" states and the last three stages are considered to be "ethnorelative" stages. Each stage is subdivided into two or three categories.⁴⁴ The following is a brief description of each stages.

Denial

Denial is the purest form of ethnocentrism. A purely ethnocentric person believes that all people in the world share his or her beliefs, values, behavior, and attitude. This form of ethnocentrism might be rare in a world of multiculturalism but it can be maintained either through isolation or separation. When a group of people is physically isolated, cultural differences cannot be experienced and the members of the society believe that there are no cultural differences in the world. When differences are encountered, people may respond with parochialism, non-hostile giggling, or studious politeness. Separation means the intentional erection of physical or social barriers to create distance from cultural differences in order to maintain the state of denial. Racially distinct neighborhoods and ethnically-selective clubs are good examples of separation.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Milton J. Bennett, "Toward Ethnorelativism: A Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity," in *Cross Cultural Orientation: New Conceptualization and Applications*, ed. R. Michael Paige (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986), 27-69.

⁴⁵ Bennett, 31-35.

Defense

People use defense mechanism when they perceive the cultural differences as threatening. When differences are recognized, people develop strategies such as denigration, superiority, and reversal. Denigration, or negative stereotyping, is the most common strategy to battle against that which is threatening. In this stage, people attribute undesirable characteristics to every member of a distinct group. In this stage, people say, “You are different; therefore you are bad.”⁴⁶ Superiority emphasizes the positive characteristics of one’s own cultural status. In this stage, people say, “It is Ok to be different, but I am better”⁴⁷ The superiority stage is the next developmental stage after denigration because difference is less negatively evaluated. Reversal involves a denigration of one’s own culture and an attendant assumption of superiority of a different culture. So it says, “I am different; therefore I am bad and you are good.”⁴⁸ This attitude has been typical of Peace Corps volunteers and other long-term sojourners.⁴⁹

Minimization

The last attempt to preserve the centrality of one’s own cultural identity involves an attempt to conceal differences by emphasizing cultural similarities. This attempt is can be developed into two categories – physical universalism and transcendent universalism. As the last stage of ethnocentric states, people at this stage still fear cultural differences even though they do not deny differences or defend themselves from the “threat” of differences. A typical statement of physical universalism is that all human beings have common physical characteristics; therefore people can be understandable to any other human being.

⁴⁶ McSpadden, 20.

⁴⁷ McSpadden, 21.

⁴⁸ McSpadden, 22.

⁴⁹ Bennett, 36-41.

Transcendent universalism suggests that all human beings are created by some single supernatural power. A common statement of transcendent universalism is that, “we are all God’s children.” This stage believes that dealing with differences is destructive; therefore it should be avoided.⁵⁰

Acceptance

At the first stage of ethnorelative states, cultural differences are acknowledged and respected. There are two stages of acceptance – respect for behavioral difference and respect for value difference. At this stage, people accept both verbal and non-verbal differences, different world views (values and beliefs). This is the stage of willingness to live in the uncertainty of being nonjudgmental.⁵¹ Even though people are not ready to adopt different behaviors and values or to adjust their own behavior to be culturally sensitive, they have a more tolerance to live with and sympathetic attitude toward differences. Transition to the next stage of intercultural sensitivity is encouraged by “emphasizing the practical application of ethnorelative acceptance to intercultural communication.”⁵²

Adaptation

This stage involves the emergence of abilities to use and acceptance of cultural difference for relating and communicating with people of other culture. This stage is different from assimilation in which one culture is identified with a new culture by losing its uniqueness and identity. Adaptation is developed into two stages: empathy and pluralism. Empathy is the “ability to experience differently in a communication context.”⁵³ The ability to empathize indicates a relatively high level of intercultural development. But this stage has

⁵⁰ Bennett, 41-46.

⁵¹ Law, Bush Was Blazing But Not Consumed, 62.

⁵² Bennett, 47-51.

⁵³ Bennett, 53.

its limitation. People in this state may think that all cultural difference is good; thus they may be frustrated when people of other cultures evaluate their own or some other culture negatively. People in this state may be able to handle respectful disagreement between or among different cultural views. Pluralism is used to indicate acceptance of biculturalism or multiculturalism. At this stage, people experience cultural difference as part of their normal selves. The state of adaptation might be good enough for intercultural communication or education. But “there is still ethnorelative territory beyond adaptation.”⁵⁴

Integration

At this stage people become multicultural person. This person is one whose “essential identity is inclusive of life patterns different from his [*sic*] own and who has psychologically and socially come to grips with a multiplicity of realities.”⁵⁵ The integration stage can be subdivided into two stages: contextual evaluation and constructive marginality. Contextual evaluation is the stage where one attains the ability to analyze and evaluate situations from one or more cultural perspectives. Persons at this stage know that their world view is not universal and that everything that is different from their world view should not be judged, but deserves to be understood and used in making decisions. Without the ability to explore and use different perspectives and world views, people in a multicultural society can develop a community that is paralyzed with indecision.

Marginality has been used to describe the position of someone who is outside of the normal cultural boundaries – it is an unhealthy outsider status. Yet marginality can be a constructive stage of intercultural sensitivity. When we practice acceptance, adaptation, and

⁵⁴ Bennett, 51-58.

⁵⁵ Bennett, 58, citing Peter S. Adler, “Beyond Cultural Identity: Reflections upon Cultural and Multicultural Man,” in Culture Learning: Concepts, Applications, and Research, ed. Richard W. Brislin (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1977), 25.

contextual evaluation regularly for a long period of time, we may feel that we do not belong to any specific culture. We may feel we are marginalized, living at the margins of more than one culture. We might be afraid or frightened by living at the margin. But constructive marginality can be the most powerful position because cultural mediation can best be accomplished best by a person of marginality who is not encapsulated in or identified with his or her own culture, but has the ability to appropriate different world view as needed in the process of mediation.⁵⁶

Eric F. H. Law expressed this final stage as “coming down from our tower of Babel and maintaining ethnorelativism.”⁵⁷ People in this stage are “nomads, sojourners; ever wandering on the ground, challenging the ethnocentric tower, calling forth people to comedown (from the tower of Babel).”⁵⁸

David Augsburger used the term “interpathy” to indicate a culturally aware person.⁵⁹ His understanding of a person with interpathy is similar to a person at the stage of integration as he asserts:

Interpathy is an intentional cognitive envisioning and affective experiencing of another’s thoughts and feelings, even though the thoughts rise from another process of knowing, the values grow from another frame of moral reasoning, and the feelings spring from another basis of assumptions. In interpathic caring, the process of “feeling with” and “thinking with” another requires that one enter the other’s world of assumptions, beliefs, and values and temporarily take them as one’s own. Bracketing my own beliefs, I believe what the other believes, sees as the other sees, value what the other values, and feel the consequent feelings as the other feels them.⁶⁰

Being interpathic means that one is capable of understanding different world views, values, and beliefs and as a consequence, is able to provide non-judgmental support.

⁵⁶ Bennett, 58-64.

⁵⁷ Law, Bush Was Blazing But Not Consumed, 46-73.

⁵⁸ Law, Bush Was Blazing But Not Consumed, 73.

⁵⁹ Augsburger, Pastoral Counseling across Cultures, 27-32.

⁶⁰ Augsburger, Pastoral Counseling across Cultures, 29-30.

Maintaining ethnorelativism or being interpathy is different from having tolerance toward differences. Many Christians have been calling for tolerance to end brokenness and violence caused by theological differences especially between conservative and liberal Christians.⁶¹ When the ethnic/cultural differences are the issue which includes power difference between “have” and “not have”, however, tolerance can imply the attitude of “I still have the power (control) so that I can tolerate the differences.” This attitude can be another form of prejudice and racism. Therefore, maintaining ethnorelativism is not about being tolerant toward ethnic/cultural differences but to accept and respect different values, beliefs and traditions, and to trust that we can carry on mission and ministry together for the glory of God despite of ethnic and cultural differences. Moving from an ethnocentric state to an ethnorelative state is the “difficult journey beyond culture, because the greatest separation feat of all is when one manages to gradually free oneself from the grip of unconscious culture.”⁶²

⁶¹ Robert Jewett calls for tolerance among Christians, conservatives and liberals, for the common mission of the church. See his book Christian Tolerance: Paul’s Message to the Modern Church (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982).

⁶² Hall, Beyond Culture, 240.

CHAPTER 3

Biblical Models of Cross-Racial/Cross-Cultural Ministry in the Book of Acts

When we look at the expansion of the early Christianity during the first century C.E., we might think that early Christians were a homogeneous group of people who shared the same or at least a similar culture because they were gathered together under Christ culture. After the life of Jesus, a new culture emerged for his followers. The first Jewish Christians were a varied group for Judaism of the first century was itself variegated and not a monolithic. Even though we hear the terms law-observant Jewish Christians and Gentiles who became Christians later, they were all God's children. But the early Christians experienced religious, cultural, social, and political differences as the number of Christians and churches grew starting from Jerusalem into Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. We can see many vivid accounts of conflicts between the Jewish Christians and the Hellenistic Christians which even developed into the stoning of Stephen. We see the clash between the apostles and the Jews who tried to maintain their identity and tradition by keeping the Mosaic law. We see Paul's encounter with pagan gods and civil cults when he was preaching the gospel in the world of Greco-Roman culture.

We tend to minimize those cultural, religious, political, ethnic, and racial differences among the early Christians and struggles to overcome those differences in the hope that the early Christianity was a unifying force in the Greco-Roman world during the first century C.E. However, the growth of the early Christianity was a result of the cross-racial/cross-cultural ministry of the apostles and disciples, especially Paul, who reached out to people by crossing racial, cultural, political, social, and religious boundaries in the expanding Greco-

Roman world. It was a result of struggles to overcome these differences and to unite the two opposing groups of people – Jerusalem centered Jewish Christians and Hellenistic Christians outside of Jerusalem.

This chapter will focus on the expansion of the early Christianity beyond the geographical, religious, and cultural differences during the first century. It will then turn to an examination of the struggles to overcome those differences to build a Christian community in the Greco-Roman world. This chapter is a suggested Bible study using the Book of Acts to explain how those two movements were developed among the early Christians, especially through ministry of disciples and Paul.

Acts is not continuous source of the history of the early Christianity. It does not describe events chronologically. Rather it describes individual events such as the expansion of Christianity from Jerusalem to the Greco-Roman world or how conflicts between Jerusalem centered Christians and other Christians were resolved. It is not a cohesive, linear presentation of the history of the early church, nor is that the author's intent.¹ Even though Acts lacks historical precision, it is unique writing in the New Testament because it describes the growth of the gospel in two different ways. First, in personal terms, it describes the growth of the gospel as initiated by Jesus and subsequently followed by his disciples and Paul. Second, in geographical terms, it traces the expansion of the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome.²

Christianity started as a part of the culture of a new Greco-Roman world – in the “Hellenistic period” – initially formed through the conquests of Alexander the Great. During

¹ Hans Conzelmann and Andreas Lindemann, Interpreting the New Testament: An Introduction to the Principles and Methods of New Testament Exegesis, trans. Siegfried Schatzmann (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988), 243.

² Howard Clark Kee, Good News to the Ends of the Earth: The Theology of Acts (London: SCM Press; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 1.

this period, many elements of different origin such as art, religion, and science contributed to an amalgamation and created a new culture referred to as “Hellenism.” Greek became the dominant language. But this process, called “Hellenization,” was not without conflict among the different religion, culture, and ethnic groups. The cities of this new world became multiracial and multicultural places and “became the most important economic, cultural, and religious activities; yet they had to solve questions of morality and religion that emerged from worldwide political, economic, and social problems. It is exactly these major Hellenistic cities in which early Christianity was formed and developed its potential as a new world religion.”³ And the expansion of the early church beyond religious, geographic, racial, and cultural differences begins with Jerusalem as its hub.

The Church in Jerusalem: Starting Point

The Book of Acts begins with Jesus’ instruction to the apostles “not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father” (Acts 1:4). “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).⁴ The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2 has an important meaning. What is implied in this vivid account in Acts 2 is an anticipatory picture of the early Christians as to draw together believers with ethnic, cultic, social, cultural, and religious differences as they witness, as one voice, to the gospel in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.⁵

³ Helmut Koester, History, Culture and Religion of the Hellenistic Age (New York, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1982), xxix-xxx.

⁴ Scripture quotations are from New Revised Standard Version.

⁵ Kee, 42.

After receiving the Spirit, followers of Jesus were changed. They made Jerusalem a place of ferment by teaching and proclaiming Jesus as Messiah in spite of the Sanhedrin's prohibition against teaching in the name of Jesus. The apostles accused the Council of the death of Jesus and proclaimed that God raised him from the dead and exalted him as God's right hand, the very one killed by action of the Council.

Peter led the Jesus movement first in Jerusalem and was able to convert many people. No one was left in need within the Christian community as people sold their lands and houses and brought the proceeds to the apostles and held everything in common. As the Christian community grew fast "filling Jerusalem," the high priests and other leaders of the traditional Jewish community were threatened and enraged. Out of rage and fear, they began to persecute the Christian community charging them with false teaching.

As a counter to this charge, one of the council members named Gamaliel, a Pharisee and sage, reminded them that recent Jewish insurrectionists had failed. He offered the advice that the Jesus movement would fail saying, "if this plan or this undertaking is of human origin. But if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them – in that case you might even be found fighting against God. (Acts 5:38-39). The result was that the apostles were free to continue to bear testimony and teach about Jesus in the Temple. Jerusalem, therefore, became the center for the Jesus movement that would soon reach Judea and Samaria, and the ends of earth (Rome), not just geographically but racially and culturally.⁶

The first cultural collision in this social, cultural, and probably ethnic outreach of early Christianity is described in Acts 6:1-6. As the Christian community grew rapidly, "the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food" (6:1). There was a division between the Hebrews and the

⁶ Kee, 43.

Hellenists in terms of culture and language. It is well known that Jews in Galilee during the first and second century C.E. were bilingual but the text clearly demonstrates that there were linguistic and cultural division between the Hebrews and the Hellenists.

Hebrew, the language of Israel, continued as the language of religious literature for the Jews even after the exile.⁷ The traditional religious books were copied and read in Hebrew and even new writings were written in Hebrew as late as the end of the Hellenistic era. The daily and business language for most Jews in Palestine area was Aramaic, a cognate language of Hebrew. After the conquest by Alexander the Great, Greek became the *lingua franca* for use civic administration and in public discourse. Aramaic became the secondary language, but it continued to be used by the Jews as a business and daily language even during the Roman imperial period.⁸ Even though the Hebrews in Jerusalem were bilingual – Aramaic and Greek – they probably used Aramaic for daily and business communication among themselves. The daily language for the Hellenists in Jerusalem was Greek.⁹ Thus there was a linguistic division between the two groups.

To solve the problem, the community of the disciples selected seven men: Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus (Acts 6:5). The fact that all seven of the Hellenists who are selected have Greek name indicates that the division between the Jews and the Hellenists was not merely linguistic but cultural as well. The problem was identified as an inequality in the distribution of daily food to the member of the community. Such distribution had been a practice from the time that members of the community had sold their houses and properties and brought them to the apostles so that everything would be held

⁷ Koester, 249.

⁸ Koester, 251.

⁹ Arthur Jeffery, "Aramaic," in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, vol. 1 (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 188.

common among the members of the community. But the dispute between the Jews and the Hellenists was more than a dispute regarding unequal distribution of daily supplies or language. It was a cultural clash between the Jews who tried to maintain their identity and tradition in the midst of the culturally aggressive and pervasive world of the Greco-Roman Empire and other Jews who were influenced by Hellenistic culture.

All seven men appear to have been selected from the Hellenist community. It implies that the solution to the dispute was not the integration of the Hellenist community and the Hebrew community.¹⁰ So the Christian community in Jerusalem was not a unified but loosely organized body in which ethnic and cultural differences were not overcome.

The extreme cultural collision among the Jews is expressed in the arrest and the stoning of Stephen (Acts 6:8-8:1). The Jews who had wrestled to maintain their cultural identity in the world of Hellenistic culture brought charges against Stephen that what they were proclaiming in the name of Jesus was the “dismantling of the temple and the law: the factors which were central to Jewish religious identity.”¹¹ The fact that Stephen’s speech in Acts 7 supports the idea that the division was not about unequal distribution of supplies but it was about conflict regarding Jewish religious identity. Stephen’s speech and the stoning of Stephen show that the Jews and the Hellenists could not co-exist in Jerusalem. It justifies separation of the Hellenists – Hellenistic Jewish Christians – from Judaism.

The Movement into Judea and Samaria

The death of Stephen and the persecution of the church by the Jews who tried to maintain their “holy place and the law” did not stop the Hellenists from spreading the

¹⁰ Brian Capper, “The Palestinian Cultural Context of Earliest Christian Community of Goods,” in *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting*, vol. 4 of *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, ed. Richard Bauckham (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 353.

¹¹ Kee, 44.

revolutionary views about God and their new identity as Christians. Instead of focusing on Jerusalem for the spreading the gospel, “all except the apostles were scattered throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria” (Acts 8:1). Judea was a small area around Jerusalem governed by Nehemiah during the Persian period. During the Greco-Roman period, the Sanhedrin, which had autonomous power under the Maccabees and delegated power under the Romans, was located in Jerusalem with autonomous power under the Maccabees and delegated power under the Romans. This governing body ruled directly over all Judea. Half of all Jewish people in Judea resided in Jerusalem in the first century.¹²

Samaria, named after the capital city of Israel, is something more than another geographical area of Palestine where Jewish people lived. People who lived in Samaria (Samaritans) believed in the God of Moses. They acknowledged Moses as the supreme apostle of God and accepted the Torah (Pentateuch) as the only authentic law of God. They also held an expectation of a great and terrible final day of reward and punishment.¹³ By the time of the development of the early church in Palestine, the Samaritans claimed that they were the “true heirs of the covenant. They had a divergent version of the Pentateuch and their shrines competed with those of the Jews for the true worship of God.”¹⁴

The origins of Samaritans is unclear, but it is believed that two different groups of people lived side by side: (a) the descendents of the colonists brought by Shalmaneser, King of Assyria, from Cutha, Babylon, Hamath, and other foreign parts after he had conquered Samaria in 722 B.C.E. and (b) the descendents of native Israelites who remained in Samaria

¹² Kenneth W. Clark, “Judea,” in The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible, vol. 4 (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 1011-012.

¹³ Theodor H. Gaster, “Samaritans,” in The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible, vol. 4 (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 193.

¹⁴ Kee, 47.

after Assyria conquered the region.¹⁵ Whatever the origins of Samaritans may have been, by the first century they claimed that they, and not the Jews, were the true descendents of Israelites. But the attitude of the Jewish people toward the Samaritans was that they were “perverters of the worship of God and of the law of God, so that they were to be denounced and contact with them avoided.”¹⁶

However the early Christians who escaped from persecution by Jerusalem Jews came to the Samaritans and proclaimed the gospel to them. The message was delivered so effectively that the “crowds with one accord listened eagerly to what was said by Philip, hearing and seeing the signs that he did, for unclean spirits, crying with loud shrieks, came out of many who were possessed; and many others who were paralyzed or lame were cured. So there was great joy in the city” (Acts 8:6-8). When the apostles in Jerusalem were informed of what was occurring in Samaria, they sent Peter and John to see. They traveled to Samaria to survey what was reported to them. They approved the Hellenists’ work in Samaria by “proclaiming the good news to many villages of Samaritans” (Acts 8:25).

One good example of cross-racial/cross-ethnic outreach is depicted in Acts 8:26-40. When an Ethiopian eunuch, an official in the royal court of Ethiopia, was returning home after worshiping in Jerusalem, he encountered Philip who proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. Eunuchs were prohibited in Mosaic Law from entering the assembly of God’s people (Deut. 23:1) thus, they were despised and rejected by the Jewish people. The eunuch was unable to understand the scripture that he was reading and he desired to understand it. He communicated his desire to Phillip. This encounter between Phillip and the eunuch implies the cross-racial expansion of the Christianity during the first century C.E. Philip’s

¹⁵ Gaster, 191-92.

¹⁶ Kee, 47.

exegesis of Isaiah 53 led the eunuch to being baptized to become a member of the newly forming Christian community.

The most aggressive spread of the gospel beyond ethnic and cultural boundaries came through the conversion of Paul. Several pericopes throughout Acts show how Paul was determined to retain the ethnic and cultic identities of the Jewish people, the people of God. So Paul asserts when he was accused of bringing Greeks into the temple and defiling the holy place:

I am a Jew, born in tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city (Jerusalem) at the feet of Gamaliel, educated strictly according to our ancestral law, being zealous for God, just as all of you are today. I persecuted this Way up to the point of death by binding both men and women and putting them in prison, as the high priest and the whole council of elders can testify about me. From them I also received letters to the brothers in Damascus, and I went there in order to bind those who were there and to bring them back to Jerusalem for punishment. (Acts 22:3-5)

Paul discloses more of the acts, in Acts 26:9-11, that he had committed to preserve Jewish identity and the Mosaic law from being defiled by the early Christians.

It is ironic that when Paul was sent to Jerusalem after his conversion, he was persecuted and even plotted against by the Hellenists – Greek speaking Jews who wished to kill him. He was sent to Caesarea and later to Tarsus so that he could escape from the plot to kill him. “Meanwhile the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and was built up. Living in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it increased its numbers” (Acts 9:31). But up to this point the spread of the gospel and the increase of the church were limited to Jewish people in Jerusalem and the adjacent territories of Judea even though Paul’s conversion in the Acts narrative trumpeted the spread of the gospel to the “Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel” (Acts 9:15).

Peter's own conversion was another event that moved the church beyond ethnic and cultural boundaries. Acts describes Peter's visit to the coastal cities, Lydda where he healed a paralyzed man, and Joppa where he raised a dead woman (32-43). Through visions sent to Cornelius and himself, Peter was convinced that both Gentiles and Jews could be the children of God.

An angel tells Cornelius where to go to find Peter in Joppa. Peter, now prepared by the vision from God to accept the Gentiles into the new Christian community (Acts 10:9-16), visits Cornelius and his close friends and relatives in Caesarea. It is interesting to note that when Peter arrives at Cornelius' home, Cornelius greets Peter in his acculturated manner – falling at his feet and worshipping him. Peter was embarrassed by this and said that he was not supposed to visit a Gentile, but God has shown him that he should have not call anyone profane or unclean (Acts 10:25-29). Peter speaks to the Gentiles saying that “God shows no partiality...All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name” (Acts 10:34-43). Peter and others who had come with him witnessed that the gift of the Holy Spirit that had been poured out on them, even on the Gentiles and baptized the Gentiles. Peter's ministry to the Gentiles was not welcomed by the circumcised Jews in Jerusalem, but after hearing Peter's speech, they “praised God, saying, ‘The God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life’” (Acts 11:18). Now the Jews as well as the Gentiles are incorporated into the new Christian community through ministry that goes beyond social, ethnic, and cultural boundaries.

The Movement to the Ends of the Earth

As a consequence of the persecution of Christians in Jerusalem which resulted in the martyrdom of Stephen, some disciples were forced to leave Jerusalem. They went as far as

Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, and they delivered the gospel to the Jews. But some men from Cyprus and Cyrene began preaching about Jesus to the Greeks (Acts 11:19-20). As a result a great number of Greeks became members of the Christian community. After hearing about the remarkable result of this event, the Christians at Jerusalem sent Barnabas to investigate what was happening in that area. Barnabas ministered to the Greeks and many more joined the Christian community. Paul who was brought to Antioch by Barnabas was able to convert a great many people and “it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called ‘Christians’” (Acts 11:26). Ministry to Gentiles is now accelerated by the activities of Paul and Barnabas. This new Christian community united to help the Christian victims of famine in Judea.

Acts 13:1 describes several leaders of the Jesus movement in Antioch: Barnabas (a Jew from Jerusalem assigned by the apostles), Simeon called “Black” (Semitic in name but perhaps ethnically of black origin),¹⁷ Lucius of Cyrene (a Roman name), Manaen (a member of the court of Herod the ruler), and Paul (a Pharisee). They are instructed by God to designate Barnabas and Paul for the next phase of outreach of the good news, which was to extend to “the ends of the earth” (Acts 13:1-3).

Paul and Barnabas continued their mission for the Jews in diaspora in the various cities of the Roman Empire beginning with Salamis on Cyprus. The Roman proconsul, who was eager to hear the word of God, summoned the traveling evangelists to hear the good news. Through the miracle performed by Paul, he was convinced that the message of the evangelists’ was true and became a believer. The key message of this pericope (Acts 13:4-12) is that through the mission of Paul and Barnabas, an official of the Roman government – a totally unlikely person – became a follower of Jesus. They continued their mission in

¹⁷ Kee, 54.

Antioch in Pisidia, and “many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas” (Acts 13:43).

As they traveled to more cities to deliver the good news to both the Jews and the Gentiles, they were confronted with religious and cultural differences. In Lystra, Paul and Barnabas were acclaimed to be the Greek gods – Barnabas as Zeus and Paul as Hermes. They had come across civic cults of the Greco-Roman world.¹⁸ The priest of Zeus and the crowd were ready to offer them sacrifice by bringing oxen and garlands. The conviction that the gods came in the human form was widespread among the Greeks. Thus when Paul and Barnabas healed the sick in the area, they were thought to be gods in human form. Now these two wonder-workers are confronted with cultural difficulties in their encounter with religiously and culturally different people.

As we come to Acts 15, we can see that the spread of the gospel to the ends of the earth is stopped temporarily so that issues of circumcision and keeping the Mosaic Law – cultural differences between the Jews and the Gentiles – could be debated and resolved before the disciples reached “the ends of the earth” with the gospel. The issue was raised in Antioch by some individuals who came from Judea. They insisted that all males must be circumcised to be saved. Paul and Barnabas and some of others were appointed to go to Jerusalem to discuss this issue with the apostles and the elders (Acts 15:1-2). Some of the members of the early Jerusalem church brought with them Pharisaic convictions; they insisted that all must keep the Mosaic Law to be a member of this new community. Peter said to the community that God gave the Gentiles the Spirit and cleansed their hearts by faith without requiring the Mosaic Law. After hearing what had happened among the Gentiles

¹⁸ David W. J. Gill, “Religion in Local Setting,” in *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting*, ed. David W. J. Gill and Conrad Gempf (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1994), 81.

through the mission of Barnabas and Paul, James formulated his position on the issue of keeping the Mosaic Law as the ground of Gentile inclusion into the new Christian community – “abstaining only from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled and from blood” (Acts 15:20).

From chapter 16 of Acts, we see a major shift of Paul’s mission from the eastern Mediterranean area where the major audience of the gospel was the Jews to the mainland of Europe where Roman culture prevailed. Paul wanted to go to Asia Minor, but the Holy Spirit did not allow him to go to that area. Inspired by a vision, Paul decided to preach the good news in Macedonia.

Paul’s visit to Macedonia is significant in the Book of Acts. Macedonia was the power base for the takeover of the Greek world by Philip, whose son Alexander the Great launched an empire from there.¹⁹ Paul, accompanied by Silas, went to Philippi where he met with a businesswoman, Lydia. But Paul and Silas encountered another cultural conflict. After healing a slave-girl who had a spirit of divination, Paul and his associates were accused of “disturbing the city and advocating customs that are not lawful for the Romans to adopt or observe” (Acts 16:20-21). The Christian movement was threatened as an unlawful customs by the Romans.

Another cultural confrontation occurred for Paul and his associates and is recorded in Acts 17. As Paul tried to persuade the Jews in the synagogue that Jesus was the Messiah that he had to suffer and die on the cross, but that God had raised him from the dead, many people were persuaded and among them were some Jews and “a great many of the Greeks and not a few of the leading women” (Acts 17:4). We can see the ethnically and socially mixed pattern of participation in the new community once more. The reaction of some of the

¹⁹ Kee, 61.

Jews is publicly to bring civil charges against Paul and his associates for “turning the world upside down,” and “acting contrary to the decrees of the emperor, saying that there is another king named Jesus” (Acts 17:6-7). “The pattern of confrontation between the movement and the political structure of Rome is once more evident, and for the author of Acts will reach its climax in the arrest and extraction to Rome of Paul.”²⁰

As Paul continued his journey to preach the gospel at Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, he encountered even more extensive religious and cultural differences. Troubled with numerous idols which dominated the life of the city-state of Athens,²¹ Paul spent his time at two places preaching the gospel: at the synagogue and the great center of commerce and common life, the Agora. His message was welcomed by local Stoic and Epicurean philosophers. Others misunderstood his message saying Paul was “a proclaimer of foreign divinities” (Acts 17: 18).

When Paul arrived in Corinth, he continued to persuade the Jews by preaching the gospel at the Synagogue. Paul’s audience in the synagogue was probably both Jews and Greeks. Once again, it was the Jews who turn against him and reviled him for destroying the law and tradition of the Jews. After encountering additional opposition from the Jews, Paul announced that he would shift the primary focus of his mission from Jews to Gentiles. The Jews accused Paul and brought him to trial for “persuading people to worship God in ways that are contrary to the law” (Acts 18:13).

Another important cultural clash occurred in Ephesus. One of the negative responses to the mission of Paul in Ephesus occurs when a campaign to discredit Paul erupts by the action of the silversmiths in Ephesus. They manufactured images of the Greek goddess

²⁰ Kee, 63.

²¹ Gill, 86.

Artemis.²² Through Paul's preaching, people of Ephesus came to believe that gods made with human hands were not gods. The commerce of the silversmiths was threatened by this new idea that Paul proclaimed. So the silversmiths led by Demetrius who made silver shrines started a riot and dragged Paul and his travel companions. He made charges against them as Christians.

Another charge was brought against Paul in the Jerusalem by Jews who tried to maintain their traditional and cultural identity by not interacting with the Gentiles. They claimed that Paul taught against Jews and Jewish law and violated the sanctity of the Temple by bringing an unclean Gentile into the temple (Acts 21:28). As a result, protected by the Roman soldiers from the angry Jewish crowd, Paul was taken into custody which led to his transfer to the end of the earth, Rome.

The eloquent discourses at the end of the book of Acts make the point that the mission of the gospel to the Gentiles is fully in accord with God's vision. That vision is to proclaim light both to the Jews and the Gentiles. In Rome, Paul was permitted to dwell in a house with a military guard. No ground for either Jewish religious or Roman civil charges was found during his stay in Rome. At the political and symbolic center of the pagan world, Paul lived for two more years and continued to proclaim the "kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance" to both the Jews and the Gentiles (Acts 28:31). The reason of rapid expansion of the early Christianity in spite of racial, ethnic, religious, political, and cultural differences among the people was that they were united under one purpose: carrying out mission and ministry to the end of the earth.

²² Koester, 378.

CHAPTER 4

Issues and Strengths in Cross-Racial/Cross-Cultural Ministry

The United Methodist Church has been working to make an inclusive church in our multicultural world through developing more multicultural congregations and exercising cross-racial/cross-cultural appointment process. This appointment process provides the denomination with the ability to send clergy to local churches where race/ethnicity and culture of the congregation differ from that of the appointed clergy. As The United Methodist Church has become an increasingly multicultural denomination during the last 30 years, the number of ethnic minority clergy has increased. “The choice of ethnic minority clergy for Episcopal, national, annual conference, and district positions has been an intentional strategy in order to increase the inclusion and power of ethnic minorities, and to address justice issue.”¹

But cross-racial/cross-cultural appointments have not always been an intentional effort to build an inclusive church through the appointment process. Some bishops and district superintendents have responded that the CR/CC appointments resulted from an imbalance of racial/ethnic clergy available and the local congregations in need of a pastor. For example, in New Jersey Episcopal Area and California-Pacific Episcopal Area, the number of Korean clergy needing appointments exceeds the number of available Korean churches. Therefore, cross-racial/cross-cultural appointments are inevitable if the clergy are to be placed.² Several clergy also say that they either requested CR/CC appointments

¹ McSpadden, 1.

² McSpadden, 2.

because a Korean church was not available or that they were appointed because for this reason.

The United Methodist Church commits itself to an open itinerary system in the appointment process. The Book of Discipline states:

Appointment are to be made with consideration of the gifts and evidence of God's grace of those appointed, to the needs, characteristics and opportunities of congregations and institutions, and with faithfulness to the commitment to an open itinerary. Open itinerary means appointments are made without regard to race, ethnic origin, gender, color, marital status, or age, except for the provisions of mandatory retirement. The concept of itinerary is important, and sensitive attention should be given in appointing clergy with physical challenges to responsibilities and duties that meet their gifts and graces. Through appointment-making, the connectional nature of the United Methodist system is made visible.³

Whether CR/CC appointments are the result of an imbalance of clergy and available congregations, or of denominational effort to realize its vision of an inclusive church in The United Methodist Church, cross-racially/cross-culturally appointed clergy, especially first generation Korean pastors have been struggling to overcome language and cultural barriers. The clergy who participate in this study agree that they are deployed with hope and fear, with courage and risk, with confidence and anxiety. They have a hope to be a bridge between two (or more) different races and cultures. They have a fear of cultural racism and discrimination. They have courage enough to come to a foreign land, with English as a second language, and to pastor a congregation with predominantly European-American members. But the cross-racial/cross-cultural appointments are a risky process because racial and cultural differences may raise questions of the effectiveness and efficiency of appointed pastors' ministry. These clergy are deployed with a confidence that CR/CC appointments are essential to making the vision of an authentically inclusive church a reality in the multicultural world. But these

³ The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2000 (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 2000), par. 430.1.

pastors also live with anxiety because the difference is real, tangible, and profound, and it can cause problems such misunderstandings, unmet expectations, and irritations between clergy and the congregation. However, differences can be as much stepping stones as stumbling blocks through the appointive process which brings the clergy and the local churches in one place where they can broaden and deepen their awareness of cultural differences.⁴

CR/CC appointments can bring a fresh spiritual visions and new life into the church especially when the church is located in multicultural community or trying to develop a multicultural congregation where values and beliefs of each of the cultures is respected and integrated into decision making and evaluation process of the church. One of the pastors interviewed for this study stated that he has been telling his congregation that “I am the fruit of mission and ministry by Methodists missionaries who came to Korea over one hundred years ago. Through my ministry here, it is my hope that you will find the same faith that your forefathers brought to Korea.”

But the integration stage⁵ of two cultures is not achieved without constant effort and a willingness to recognize the differences and to show respect for them. When we are encapsulated in our own culture and cannot see the differences, we cannot move from cultural ethnocentrism to cultural relativism. We cannot be free of our own cultural racism.⁶ This chapter will first analyze interviews with first generation Korean pastors who are serving cross-racial/cross-cultural appointments in the California-Pacific Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. It is hoped that this analysis will cull from the interviews problems and strengths unique to these pastors’ special situation. This study will then look at

⁴ Susan M. Morison and Gilbert H. Caldwell, “Crossing Cultural, Racial, and Gender Boundaries,” in *Send Me?: The Itinerary in Crisis*, ed. Donald E. Messer (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 114-15.

⁵ Bennett, 58-65.

⁶ Augsburg, 18.

ways to empower and enhance cross-racial/cross-cultural ministry. This chapter is, then, a narrative analysis of the interviews that I have conducted with 10 pastors for the purpose of this project.

Issues and Problems

The clergy who participated in this study reported that they have experienced issues or problems during their ministry in cross-racial/cross-cultural settings. Issues that they reported centered on English competency, feelings of negativity from the congregation, feeling of isolation, lack of support from peers and the Annual Conference, racism, difficulties in communication due to cultural differences in communication, and defensive reaction from the congregation.

Problem with English Competency

All clergy reports that language competency has been the major issue during their ministry in cross-racial/cross-cultural ministry setting. They experienced difficulty especially in delivering the sermon during the worship service. Most of them say they don't have any problem talking conversing with members during the visitation or small group discussions. The problem mainly surfaced when the clergy delivered the sermon.

These first generation Korean pastors lived in Korea until adulthood and then came to America. Thus they naturally had a significant Korean-accented English and problems in pronouncing certain sounds in English. One pastor reports:

After the first Sunday, one of the members of the church came to me said, "I couldn't understand everything that you said during your preaching, but I liked your style of worship. I felt the worship was well prepared and organized. I haven't this feeling for a while. If you can improve your English, it would be great.

Some clergy report that they use a dictionary and lectionary materials when they prepare the sermon. Naturally, they choose words and idioms that are not used in daily conversation,

meaning that they may have problems pronouncing the words and idioms they select for the sermon.

Problems with English competency are intensified when the clergy have a relational problem with a parishioner(s) or when the clergy are not welcomed by the congregation. A female clergy reports:

Almost every Sunday after the worship service, several church members said they could not understand what I said during the worship service. I visited their home and talked if there was anything that I could do to improve their listening, but they kept saying they could not understand me and there was nothing I could do to improve the situation. It continued until I had another appointment and left the church. It was so frustrating for me during my ministry in that particular church. I think it happened mainly because they were not happy about me, Asian female, being their pastor. The church has a long history and never had an Asian female pastor before.

Another clergy says:

Yes, I have a problem with my English, but that is inevitable. It is my second language. Everybody knows how it is difficult to learn the second language, especially when you try to learn it after you become an adult. There are sounds that I cannot pronounce like the native speaker. I have Korean accent in my English. No matter what I do, probably I cannot completely get rid of them. My church members understand it and most of them even appreciate my courage to be their pastor. Of course when I came to the church, I had problems with my English. As I have been developing a good relationship with the parishioners, however, it seems the problem goes away. Some might say they can not understand some words during my preaching, but nobody is complaining that they can not understand me anymore. I think good relationship with the parishioners matters. It can change the whole picture like miracle.

It is clear that English competency is the major issue in CR/CC appointments, but there are ways to solve the problem. Increasing both the language competency of the clergy and developing good relationships are important for the success of cross-racial/cross-cultural appointments of the church. The latter will increase the listening competency of the parishioners. I will discuss ways to increase the language competency in the following section.

Feelings of Negativity and Rejection from the Church

This is another major issue that many clergy have experience during their ministry in the local churches. One clergy who was appointed to a large congregation reports that he had feelings that he was not welcomed by some members of the church. He says:

The church is a pretty good size, with predominantly White members in a White neighborhood. Other minorities have not moved into the community yet because it is located in remote area from the bigger cities. When I went to the church, I had this feeling that some were not welcoming me as their pastor. Of course I expected this kind of rejection. The church is self-sustaining with stable membership if not growing. The church has never had either a minority or a female pastor before. They can say that there is no reason that they have to have a minority pastor. After all it is a White church. But here I am. So I can understand why some of the church members are feeling in that way.

Other pastors report another form of negativity from cross-racial/cross-cultural appointments.

One pastor says:

Most of first generation Korean pastors are appointed to small, declining, and even dying churches. When those churches have a minority pastor, they might feel that the appointed minority pastor is the only choice that they can have because they are small, dying churches. They might feel that they cannot afford a “real” pastor, but a pastor who can not speak English well. I bring my own gifts and talents and grace in my ministry. I have a passion as strong as any other pastors. But I am not accepted as an equal to others just because I am a minority. It seems minority pastors are sent to the churches that nobody wants to go. Sometimes I feel it eats up my passion for the ministry.

This problem has been discussed at length. The clergy came to the conclusion that education and training for the local churches is critical before the cross-racial/cross-cultural appointive process is implemented. The District Superintendent has to make it clear that this is not to be viewed as appointing a captain to a sinking ship. This appointment of a minority pastor to a church with Euro-America members is an intentional part of open itinerary system of The United Methodist Church and the pastor is bringing in his or her own knowledge, skill, gifts and grace, as given by God, to the ministry.

Feeling of Isolation and Lack of Support

Many clergy report that they had feelings of isolation. When they were appointed to the local church, they and their family were the only Koreans in the church. One pastor whose first appointment was to a cross-racial/cross-cultural setting reports:

My first appointment was a cross-racial/cross-cultural appointment to the church located in a small town away from the major cities. Most of the residents of the area were Euro-Americans and some Hispanics who moved into the area to work in the farms and orange fields. My family was the only Korean in that area as far as I know. I had a wonderful ministry at there. My family and I were welcomed and had a good relationship with the parishioners. But my wife and I felt loneliness. I had a good experience, I learned a lot through the ministry at there, I grew a lot, but it was difficult for my family and myself to be far away from the people that we knew for a long time.

Even though the pastor and his/her family were welcomed and loved by the parishioners, they had a feeling of isolation – cultural isolation. Others report that they had feelings of isolation because they had not had support from the Annual Conference before, during, or after the appointments. All clergy say they were appointed to cross-racial/cross-cultural ministry without any kind of training or education even though some of them report that they expected or requested CR/CC appointments. One pastor reports:

When I had my cross-racial/cross-cultural appointment, it was a surprise for me even though I thought about it because Korean church was not available when I needed an appointment. I wish I had some kind of orientation or training before I was deployed to the local church. I learned about United Methodist policy and discipline, worship and hymnody when I was in the seminary. But all of my previous church experience was from Korean churches. When I had my first funeral, I didn't know whether I could use the Korean style ceremony or not. It took a time to be used to and comfortable with worship and everything in the church. I think there should be some kind of orientation or education before a Korean pastor is deployed to an Anglo church.

Many clergy agreed with the need of strong connections especially between Korean pastors and the Annual Conference, but no Korean pastors initiated or requested the connection. It is necessary to note that Korean pastors are from a High Power Distance and Collectivism

culture, meaning they are emotionally dependant to an organization or institution, but they may not initiate to establish the connection by themselves. They might wait for the Annual Conference to take an action first to establish the connection. They might want the Annual Conference to provide support and even directions in their ministry. But the Annual Conference has Low Power Distance and Individualism culture which might encourage independence of the local pastors and their ministry even though the United Methodist Church is characterized by its connectionalism.

Racism

Most clergy say they have experienced racism, mostly not direct racism toward them but through racist comments or remarks during in one-to-one conversation or group gatherings such as Bible study classes or meetings. On pastor reports that he felt racism when he was talked down to by the office manager of the church. He says:

When the senior pastor was on sick leave for an extensive period of time, I had to carry all the responsibilities that the senior pastor and I shared. One day I was really tired after having a long day with visitations, meetings, and other obligations, and I was not able to finish an article that I was supposed to write for the coming issue of the church's news letter. I explained the situation to the church's secretary and promised that I would finish it by the next day. Later the office manager was upset about it and talked to me in a way that was not appropriate. He told me, "You better do this, you better do that..." I understood why he was upset but the way he talked to me was not right.

The pastor was from High Power Distance culture and the office manager is from Low Power Distance culture. Thus the problem here might have been caused by cultural differences in understanding of power and authority. Alternatively, those cultural differences may have served only to intensify what would have been insulting even in the manager's own culture. But when I asked about the cultural differences, that pastor responds, "If I were White pastor, he would not have talked in the way that he talked to me." Others report

unchallenged racism from their congregations. Several clergy say that they have heard racist remarks and comments from their parishioners during the formal and informal gatherings of the church. The clergy believe that some of the parishioners do not know whether their remarks are racist comments or not. They are faithful and sincere members but have not had a chance to learn that their certain remarks toward minorities were racist. One pastor says, “When I told to the members during the Bible study class that the term “oriental” had a racist connotation, they replied that they didn’t know about it and apologized for using the word before.”

The clergy also report that they have received encouragement and support from their parishioners. One says during the interview, “Once one of my parishioners told me, ‘Never underestimate a person who speaks English with an accent. It means that person is bilingual and bicultural, and has a broader perspective than a monolingual person.’”

Misunderstandings of Body Language and Gestures

A couple of clergy report that they had an embarrassing moment because they were not familiar with the body language, especially eye contact during conversation in Western cultures. One clergy says:

One day I was talking with a woman during the fellowship time. She had been coming to the church about a month with her little baby. During the conversation I dropped my eyes without knowing what I was doing. Unfortunately she thought I was looking at her breasts. But I didn’t mean it. That’s what we do in Korean culture. We do not make a direct eye contact when we talk with a senior person or woman as a way of showing respect. But my (Korean) behavior was misunderstood by the woman as if I was looking at her body part that I was not supposed to. She never came back to the church and I didn’t know what to do.

The clergy is explaining differences of unconscious, internal cultural understanding of the two different worlds. The clergy was doing what he was supposed to do: showing respect to the woman by not making direct eye contact during the interaction. But his body language

was misunderstood by the woman as a rude behavior. Neither of them knew about the other's culture. They did not know what eye contact or dropping of the eyes meant in the other culture. Other clergy explained different stories related with cultural differences in body language and gesture. One clergy says:

When I am in an awkward, uncomfortable situation, or embarrassed, or even angry with someone or something, I would laugh or smile without saying what I am feeling. When I do that, it seems others in my church are confused or don't know what to say about it.

In Korean culture – High Context culture – most of the communication is done through pre-programmed information. For instance, laughing in this context means that the person is not comfortable with the situation that he or she is in. Others will understand the meaning of a laugh and may try not to push the issue anymore to help the other person save face. In these High-Context cultures, it is not necessary to use direct expression when embarrassed in an awkward situation, or angry. But in America – Low-Context culture – it is important to say what we feel or think. Good communication depends upon such disclosure. Thus, Americans will use direct, open, and explicit message as the main means of communication. The indirect way of communication skills of the pastor from a high-context culture might be understood as timid and incompetent in American culture.

Defensive Reaction from the Congregation

As mentioned earlier, most Korean pastors are appointed to small, declining churches. One clergy reports that when he suggested his plan to the administrative council of the church to host another ethnic congregation of the United Methodist Church, members rejected his idea strongly. After that he started to have problems such as relational problems and language problems. He reports:

The church was not happy about my idea. I believe they thought I was trying to change the church into an ethnic minority church. Church membership has been declining for many years and the church was having financial problem. My idea was to share the church facility with an ethnic minority congregation for two reasons: we could have some release from the financial difficulty by sharing the maintenance costs, and we could reflect the ethnic diversity of the community. But my idea was rejected and it brought me trouble.

The defensive reaction of the congregation might be related to the feelings of negativity and rejection that described earlier. It was told that some key members of the church said they could not understand the pastor's English and requested another pastor. Other clergy report that when they had problems, either relational problems or administrative problems in the local church, some parishioners said they could not understand what pastor said especially during the sermon, a claim that had not been made earlier.

Strengths

All clergy agree that cross-racial/cross-cultural appointment has its own strengths. They say they bring an intangible quality to the ministry and an opportunity for all to experience cultural differences between the West and the East.

The Intangible Quality of Ministry

Korean churches have a tradition that emphasizes the importance and power of prayer in the Christian life. One pastor states that when he was appointed to a Euro-American church, he began to have an early morning prayer meeting on Saturdays. In Korean churches, an early morning prayer meeting is a part of the normal spiritual life of the congregation. When he made an announcement, members of the church were reluctant. But as they began the gathering, more and more members came to the prayer meeting.

Other clergy report that they are known as a pastor who prays a lot, who makes frequent visitations, and who is present in the lives of the church members. One female

clergy says whenever she makes a home or hospital visitation, she has lay leaders accompany her. She never forgets to pray for the members whenever she has a chance. Her sincere prayer is always appreciated by the members of the church.

One male clergy says his ministry in his church is jointly carried out with his wife. He and his wife invite the choir once in a while for an informal dinner at their house and treat them in a “Korean way,” meaning with sincerity and warm hospitality. Her presence in the pastor’s ministry is very much appreciated in the church.

Others report that they are known as a pastor with a strong passion for ministry. All agree that even though they have problems with English language competence and that there are cultural differences, they can be overcome by their passion, sincerity, and faithfulness – the intangible qualities of the pastor – for their ministry. It is not about different skin color or culture but what the person has in his or her heart. In many cases the pastor’s passion for the faith and his or her commitment to the ministry bring new life to the congregations which are usually small or struggling to survive in a multicultural community. The clergy report that many churches are energized by the new spirituality of the pastor.

Bringing Cultural Differences into the Life of the Congregation

Many clergy say that the different culture that they bring to the church is often appreciated by the congregation. They report that their congregations come to the stage where they say difference is good and that they want to learn more about different cultures. Many members of the congregation actually enjoy the difference, but the difference that they enjoy is external culture, that tip of the iceberg such as food and the Korean norm of respecting elders. However, this will bring the opportunity for a congregation to be exposed to another culture and perhaps to learn that they are cultural being. This will open the door

that will lead the clergy as well as the congregations from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism.

Empowering Cross-Racial/Cross-Cultural Ministry

All the clergy who participated in the interview suggested number of ways to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of cross-racial/cross-cultural ministry. Everyone agrees that the first and the most important action that a cross-culturally appointed clergy should take is to increase his or her English language proficiency. They also suggested the ability to deal with prejudice, racism, and negativity from the local congregation; having mentor(s) from whom pastor can get help and support; the ability to be interpathic; training and education to learn about cultural differences between pastor's and the congregation's native culture and how these differences affect their ministry; and finally but importantly training and education by the Annual Conference for both the clergy who are to be cross-racially and cross-culturally appointed and the local congregations who will accept these clergy.

Language Competency

Since the first generation Korean clergy were born and raised in Korea, all of them said they experienced difficulties with English in the local churches. The difficulty seems intensified during the worship service when the clergy must deliver a sermon. All clergy say that they either take classes or secure tutoring to improve their English competency. A few clergy say that they meet with one of the members who is willing to spend time to correct pastor's accent and practice the sermon before its Sunday proclamation. One clergy says:

Every Saturday morning I met with the lay leader of the church and preached the coming Sunday's sermon in front of him. He would correct my accent and grammatical errors from my sermon. It was very embarrassing for me to do that every Saturday, but I had no choice except doing that to make sure my sermon was delivered as I intended. When I was appointed to another and leaving the church, the lay leader wrote an article to the local newspaper. He said that he was a minister for his minister, helping him to improve the English competency. Through the process, I learned a lot and was able to maintain good relationship with the lay leader.

A couple of clergy say that they have been providing copies of their sermon so that people who can not understand the sermon can pick up the copy and read it during the preaching. This method is helpful especially when the congregation has elderly members who need hearing aids to communicate with others. Many of the Korean clergy serving cross-racial/cross-cultural ministries were appointed to local churches with predominantly elderly members many of whom have less ability to hear well. But others suggest that distributing copies of the sermon before it is preached delays the congregation's increasing its listening competency. As people become accustomed to listen to a person with a different accent, their listening competency is improved. One clergy hopes that he will not have to make copies of his sermon.

Several clergy also mention cultural differences in communication. In Western, low-context culture, people use more direct and open communication, but in Korean, high-context culture, people use more indirect and implicit communication. One clergy says:

When I am frustrated with something or someone, or even when I am angry, I do not say, "I'm angry." When it happens to me, I usually laugh slightly. My face might be flashed and the tone of my voice might be different but I do not show my anger or frustration. That's what we do in Korean culture. Especially as pastors, that is what we do in the church. Pastors do not express anger. I don't know if this is right behavior in American culture. But I am who I am and I cannot change it.

First generation Korean clergy were raised in the culture where silence is equated with wisdom. Some clergy suggest that this culture might not be effective when the clergy is working in European-American church. Thus, they come to the conclusion that the clergy need to understand cultural differences in communication. All agreed that for a pastor to function effectively in a local church, it is essential that the clergy be competent in the English language. For this they could utilize classes, training, and even language therapy.

The following are some of the suggestions from both clergy and lay participants in McSpadden's study. They are similar to what the Korean pastors suggest in order to increase English language competency:

- Appoint a member of the congregation as a language mentor or trainer
- Enroll in an accent reduction class, advanced English conversation class, and/or speech class especially designed for the foreign born professionals working in the USA
- Work with a drama/dialect coach who specializes in training foreign born people.
- Ask someone to correct the sermon for grammar, style, and idiom.
- Take language therapy from a person who specializes in training foreign born people. Therapy might be expensive, but it is the most effective method to increase English competency. The District office or Annual Conference might provide some financial support.
- Maintain personal and small group interaction with the congregation. This will increase the listening competency of the congregation.⁷

Strong and Positive Sense of Self

One of the problems found in CR/CC appointment was racism and rejection by the congregation. All clergy agree that it is inevitable that there will be some degree of racism, rejection, and stereotype of foreign born clergy. It might even be unchallenged racism or it might be intentional racism.

Even though we are living in the multicultural society, many Euro-American people experience racism and rejection even in Christ's church. If the pastor cannot deal with

⁷ McSpadden, 93.

racism or rejection by the members of the congregation, he or she is not appropriate for CR/CC appointments, unless this sensitivity can be overcome. It is suggested that before the clergy receives a CR/CC appointment, it is important that they ask the following questions of themselves: Am I capable of dealing with racism and rejection from church members even it comes from only a few members of the church? Can I deal with it in a positive and constructive way?

Providing Mentor(s) for Support

Some clergy suggest that maintaining close and supportive relationship with a mentor(s) is helpful in resolving conflict that the clergy might experience in a local congregation. One clergy says:

I keep close relationship with two mentors: a Korea pastor and a Euro-American pastor. Whenever I am in a situation that I cannot understand or solve by myself, I call them and ask their insights. The Korean mentor gives me his “Korean” advice and the other pastor gives me “American” advice. Then I am able to come up with a solution by integrating their advices. I have received a lot of support from them and I was able to survive my first cross-racial/cross-cultural appointment through this supportive relationship with them.

Most clergy in this study agreed that keeping a supportive relationship with a mentor who shares the same values and beliefs in ministry is crucial, especially for those who serve CR/CC appointments.

Being Culturally Aware through Study and Training

Clergy who participated in this study agree that understanding cultural differences in communication, leadership style, and pastoring style are important for cross-cultural competency. Wanda M. L. Lee, in her book Introduction to Multicultural Counseling

suggests characteristics of culturally skilled counselors.⁸ These characteristics can be applied to clergy serving CR/CC ministries. Culturally skilled clergy are:

- Aware and sensitive to their own cultural heritage as well as that of their parishioners. They know how their own culture affects their ministry in the congregation.
- Aware of how their own cultural values and beliefs influence their ministry.
- Open to contrast their own values and beliefs and attitudes with culturally different parishioners in a nonjudgmental fashion.
- Able to recognize the limits of their competencies and expertise. Thus they are willing to expand their competencies through education and training.
- Comfortable with differences and respect those that exist between themselves and the parishioners in terms of race, ethnicity, and culture. They know about communication styles of different cultures, and as this difference may clash with or foster the communication process with the parishioners, they must anticipate the impact it may have on others.
- Aware of their stereotype and preconceived notions that they may hold toward other racial and ethnic groups.
- Constantly seeking to understand themselves as racial and cultural beings, and actively seeking a nonracist identity.
- Able to find common ground with their parishioners in terms of gifts and grace of both the clergy and the congregation so that the clergy and the congregation develop “we-ness” in the church.

⁸Lee, 207-09.

- Able to develop the capacity of “interpathy”⁹ in their ministry for a better understanding of parishioners.
- Constantly seeking educational, consultative, and training experiences to improve their understanding and effectiveness in working with competencies.

It is important for the clergy to be open to learning about differences, and they be willing to be changed, in order to work with different people in the congregation.

Training and Education from District and Annual Conference Level for both the Clergy and the Congregation

Participants in this study agree that training and education from the District and Annual Conference level for the clergy and the congregations will enhance and empower the cross-racial/cross-cultural appointments. This should take place before an appointment is made and continue after the appointment is initiated. Training and education for the clergy is given in order to prepare them to be culturally aware and competent pastors. Most Korean immigrant pastors do not have enough experience in policy and process of The United Methodist Church. In addition, they may not have enough knowledge and skills to organize and lead daily activities in the a local church of The United Methodist Church. Therefore, before deployment, training and education for the clergy will serve to reduce confusion and anxiety that could otherwise develop and negatively affect the ministry. It will serve to increase the clergy’s ability to be an effective pastor in the church.

Each Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church has been providing Residency in Ministry (RIM) events for probationary members. Several participants of this

⁹ Augsburg, 27-32.

study suggest that RIM events would be a good place to provide such training and education for the pastors as they are preparing to be full members of the Annual Conference.

Training and education for the local church is provided in order to help the congregation be open to, accept, and trust the cross-racial/cross-cultural appointive process. Openness includes the ability to welcome differences of the clergy and to help them feel safe in the local church. Acceptance is the ability to communicate different values, beliefs, and traditions and to respect differences; it is the ability to make people feel significant, important, honored, and esteemed. The apostle Paul asserts, “Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God” (Rom. 15:7). The main reason that early Christianity spreading rapidly from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth was that strangers from different races, ethnicity, religion, and cultures were welcomed into the community which shared Christ-culture. Trust is the belief that we can carry on mission and ministry together for the glory of God even though there are racial and cultural differences. Trust helps us to bond together, and to rely on one another for the common purpose of the Gospel. It is the belief that we can overcome our differences. It is the belief that we can integrate our differences so that we can work together to continue Church’s mission and ministry for the people of God. Therefore training and education from the District and Annual Conference level is critical to the success of CR/CC ministry in the church. How to Workshop at the District level was suggested as a good opportunity to provide such education and training for the local congregation.

Keeping a Liaison between the Clergy and the District Superintendent

Some clergy suggest that maintaining a permanent avenue of liaison between the clergy serving CR/CC appointments and a culturally competent District Superintendent is

necessary to enhance the effectiveness of ministry. Many clergy agree that some District Superintendents are not sufficiently culturally aware to understand issues and problems that cross-culturally appointed clergy experience in the local church. They suggest that training and education for the District Superintendent is an important part of making the cross-racial/cross-cultural appointive process effective and efficient. The liaison District Superintendent can develop training and education for both the clergy and the congregations by reflecting the clergy's experiences of the CR/CC appointment settings.

Support for the Family

Participants of this study also agree that the feeling of inadequacy and isolation is common for not only the clergy serving CR/CC appointments but for their families as well. In the case of cross-racial/cross-cultural ministry, the pastor's family is usually the only ethnic minority family or one of a few ethnic minority families in the congregation. In the case where the pastor's family is the only Korean family, their sense of isolation and inadequacy can be heightened. Thus, clergy suggests that ongoing support for their family is also important for the effective and successful cross-racial/cross-cultural ministry.

Maintain Good Interpersonal Relationships with Parishioners

The importance of maintaining good interpersonal relationships with lay people in the congregation was emphasized by all the clergy participants in this study. One pastor says:

When I had good personal relationships with the parishioners, I have not heard anyone complaint about my English accent. But when things were going bad after they knew that I was leaving the church (waiting for an appointment to another church), some members complained that they could not understand me. I was embarrassed and frustrated, and I didn't understand why my accent suddenly became a problem. I was having a hard time since then until I had another appointment and left the church. Now I understand why some members complained about my English accent. It was not about my accent. They were expressing the feeling of betrayal.

Another pastor says:

I came to America when I was an adult and I have an accent in my English. That's for sure and I know that I cannot get rid of it completely no matter what I do. It will be there. During a couple of years of my cross-racial/cross-cultural ministry, members said they could not understand me. But that problem disappeared slowly as I developed good relationship with the parishioners through visitations. I know they became accustomed to my English as they heard me preaching and talking. But as I made more and more visitations and develop good relationship, the problem went away. I think good personal relationship really matters.

All the clergy agree that developing good relationships with the congregation through pastoral presence, calls and visitations, and passion for the ministry is the key to developing trust and mutual respect in cross-cultural ministry.

CHAPTER 5

Summary and Conclusion

Culture is dictatorial unless understood and examined. It is not that man[sic] must be in sync with, or adapt to his[sic] culture but that cultures grow out of sync with man[sic]. When this happens people go crazy and they don't know it. In order to avoid mass insanity people must learn to transcend and adapt their culture to the times and to their biological organisms. To accomplish this task, since introspection tells you nothing, man[sic] needs the experience of other cultures. I.e. to survive, all cultures need each other.¹

We are living in a multicultural world, especially we who live in Southern California.

We meet people with different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds everyday on every block of our neighborhoods. Churches are surrounded with Hispanics, Asians, African-Americans, and Euro-Americans, yet many churches are still maintaining their racial, ethnic, and cultural homogeneity of the past, becoming a "White Island" in the multicultural neighborhood.

The United Methodist Church has responded to this change by introducing a CR/CC appointment process in order to make the vision of an authentic and inclusive church a reality in local churches. But the racial-ethnic clergy serving in largely Anglo-American churches who participated in this study agreed that they had feelings of inadequacy and isolation due to the racial and cultural differences between themselves and the congregation. They shared that they had experienced racism, mostly unchallenged racism from their parishioners.

The purpose of this study has been three-fold: (a) to introduce the reader to basic issues and concepts related to how different cultures affect people's ways of thinking, behavior, and communication; (b) to explain the expansion of the early Christianity in terms of cross -cultural ministry by the apostles, disciples and followers of Jesus utilizing the Book

¹ Hall, Beyond Culture, 282-83.

of Acts; (c) to seek ways to enhance cross-racial/cross-cultural appointments in the United Methodist Church. The work of anthropologists, especially Edward T. Hall's study, shows that culture controls how we think, behavior, and communicate. We become trapped in our own culture and become ethnocentric people. When one culture collides with another culture, most damage occurs at an unconscious level. When we see people whose behavior or thinking or communication is different from our own, it can lead to hasty judgments, rejection, stereotyping, and discrimination.

The clergy in this study agree that English competency – accent, pronunciation, idioms and vocabulary, etc. – has been the major problem second only to the feelings of isolation and inadequacy. They suggested ways to increase effectiveness and efficiency of CR/CC appointments: facilitation of English competency; support for a strong sense of self to overcome racism and negativity from the congregation; a mentoring system; study and education to increase cultural competency, maintaining the clergy's family support; training for the local churches to lead them to culturally competent congregations; and developing good interpersonal relationships with parishioners. As multicultural competence and knowledge increase among the clergy, local churches, and Annual Conference, the multi-racial/multi-cultural appointive process will be increasingly welcomed and enhanced in the local churches.

As Edward T. Hall asserts, to be free from our own ethnocentrism, we need another culture. CR/CC appointments will bring the church the opportunity to encounter with other cultures with shared vision rooted in the Gospel. Cross-racially, cross-culturally appointed clergy can be the bridge between two cultures. They are the bicultural and bilingual people

who will help Christians come down from the “tower of ethnocentrism.”² They can be the mediator who have the ability of “contextual evaluation” and “constructive marginality.”

The Apostle Paul was a devout Jew with Christianity in his heart. He was able to bring the gospel to both the Jews and the Gentiles which resulted in the rapid expansion of the early Christianity.

To make CR/CC appointments successful, more study is needed. Especially the findings of this study strongly suggested that training and education for the local congregation is essential if we desire to become an authentically inclusive church through this appointive process in The United Methodist Church. When members of the local church are able to integrate cultural and racial differences between them and the clergy whose race and culture are different from their own, then, and only then will there be a truly open and effective itinerary system.

But becoming a person with “contextual evaluation” and “creative marginality” is not an easy task. Becoming a culturally competent person takes time and commitment. It is only possible when we constantly seek to understand ourselves as racial and cultural beings and to increase cross-cultural competence through educational efforts and training experiences. However, it is essential that we embark upon this journey “beyond culture” in order to create the Church that is good in God’s sight.

² Law, Bush Was Blazing But Not Consumed, 59-60.

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